# Claiming Sounds, Constructing Selves: The Racial and Social Imaginaries of South African Popular Music

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# Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, original work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination.

Signed: _____

Durban, 3 day of November, 2005.

## Abstract:

This thesis explores some of the ways in which listening to South African popular music allows individuals to enter into imaginative engagements with others in South Africa, and in so doing, negotiate their place in the social landscape. Taking as its starting point the notion of the "musical imaginary" – the web of connotational meanings arising out of the interaction between music and society, rendering it a particularly suitable medium through which to imagine social actors – it focuses specifically on the role of music in constructions of 'race' and, to a lesser extent, of 'nation'. It examines some of the ways in which dominant discourses exert pressure on what is imagined, as well as highlighting the creativity of listeners who appropriate the musical imaginary for their own ends of identification. It attempts to depict the complexity of musical identification in post-apartheid South Africa, in which individuals must negotiate multiple boundaries marking difference, including categories of 'race', ethnicity, gender and class. It also investigates perceptions of the role of music in generating new identities and modes of social interaction, and offers some speculations as to how an analysis of these perceptions may contribute to current theoretical models of change in multicultural societies.

# Table of Contents:

**Page number**

Chapter 1:
Introduction.....2

Chapter 2:
The Dissemination, Interpretation, and Internalisation
of Dominant Discourses of Music and 'Race' in
South Africa.....9

Chapter 3:
Examining the Discourses of Kwaito.....26

Chapter 4:
Examining the Discourses of South African Jazz.....50

Chapter 5:
Examining the Discourses of South African Rock.....72

Chapter 6:
The Role of South African Popular Music in Imagining
a National Identity.....93

Chapter 7:
The Role of Music in Social Change in South Africa.....124

Chapter 8:
Conclusion.....161

Appendix A:
List of Interviewees.....170

Appendix B:
List of Bands and Artists.....173

Works Cited.....184

Select Discography.....191

# Chapter 1:
# Introduction

In this thesis, I examine ways in which music is involved in imagining identity – one's own and those of others. This examination is located within the context of contemporary South Africa, and the analysis is drawn from the experiences and perceptions of individual South Africans as expressed in interviews, focusing specifically on the role of music in imagining and engaging with the construction of 'race' and, to a lesser extent, 'nation'[1]. Central to this discussion is Born and Hesmondhalgh's notion of the "musical imaginary" (2000: 2). This concept refers to the web of connotational meanings arising out of the interaction between music and society, making it a particularly suitable medium for imagining identities. They suggest that "[i]t is precisely music's extraordinary powers of imaginary evocation of identity and of cross-cultural and intersubjective empathy that render it a primary means of both marking and transforming individual and collective identities" (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000: 32). They also stress that these imaginary processes are shaped and directed by dominant musical discourses. They argue that when researching these issues, we must be aware that "cultural expectations and norms, or dominant musical discourses, may be in tension with individual identities and may exert powerful pressures of musical subjectification." (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000: 33).

In their edited volume, articles focus on the musical imaginary as expressed by composers and musicians. In my research I wished to focus rather on the ways in which listeners imagine through music, and how these imaginary identifications are influenced by the dominant musical discourses referred to by Born and Hesmondhalgh. In particular, I was interested to investigate how the omnipresence in everyday life in South Africa of "race thinking" (Maré 2001: 79) feeds into discourses constructing music as a marker of racial identity. I was curious as to how ordinary South Africans who listen to popular

[1] In this thesis, I use single inverted commas as 'scare' quotes, and double inverted commas to indicate quotes and song titles.

music experience and deal with the linking of 'race' and music. For example, I wondered whether listeners utilise the imaginative potential of music to reinforce prior identities focusing on 'race', or, alternatively, to negotiate new ones that extend beyond the confines of the rigid racial classifications entrenched by the Apartheid government, and still in official use ten years into democracy (Posel 2001).

In a society such as South Africa in which individual subjects are constantly made aware of racial classification – their own and those of others – (Maré 2001), I anticipated that the dominant articulations of group identity to music would involve 'race'. For this reason, the bulk of my interview questions focused on drawing out perceptions of the links between 'race' and music. However, a secondary goal of this study was to discover to what extent listeners imagine a South African national identity through music. Coming from a history in which racial and ethnic identity were emphasised at the expense of a South African identity – in which 'race' and ethnicity were, in some cases, used to exclude individuals from sharing in a South African identity, and to limit their citizenship to that of their putative 'homeland' – establishing a common national identity in post-apartheid South Africa has been an elusive goal (cf Gqola 2001, Alexander 2002). I was interested to find out whether music was involved in constructing a shared post-apartheid South African identity in the consciousness of listeners.

In analysing the processes of imagining through music discussed by my research participants, I found it useful to take into consideration a point made by Hesmondhalgh (2003: 2) in a paper discussing lacks in empirical music research. Hesmondhalgh criticises the use of the 'interactionist' model, in which the perceptions of listeners are analysed as if individuals are free to interpret the meanings of the music they hear in whichever way they choose. In order to avoid an analysis informed by this approach, throughout the process of interpreting the interviews I made every effort to remain vigilant for evidence of social norms and discourses constraining the interpretive freedom of research participants. In this study, I attempt to draw out and make clear the traces of these dominant interpretative norms as they were present in the interviews. I also explore the various ways in which these individuals engage with such discourses and social

conventions of musical meaning in their efforts to imagine their place in relation to constructions of 'race' and nation.

In planning this research project, I chose to focus my study primarily on music genres rather than on particular songs or artists. This decision was informed by Frith's argument that in linking musical sounds to social worlds, generic classification plays a pivotal role (1998: 89–90). For Frith, genre "must refer to an implied community" (1998: 91). Following from this, I assumed that the discourses constructing the relationship between music and 'race' would be most evident in interviewees' discussions of genre[2]. For this reason, I selected the genres of kwaito, South African rock and South African jazz as the focus points around which to conduct research into the articulations of 'race' and music. I selected these three particular genres because in my experience as a young South African, each had very different racial associations: I had heard kwaito labelled as 'black music', rock as 'white music', whereas the racial articulations of jazz seemed less rigid and the audiences less racially exclusive. I anticipated that these genres would present contrasting imaginative possibilities to the listener, and hoped that by focusing my study on them, I would gain insight into varying permutations of the 'musical imaginary'.

## Methodology

I conducted in-depth interviews with 31 South Africans from across the racial spectrum. As a young South African who has lived through South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy, and who has only recently become aware of the powerful role of racial discourses in shaping the formation of my subjectivity, including my choices regarding what music to study and listen to, I was curious to learn about the perceptions and experiences of other South Africans of a similar age. Furthermore, being a university student allowed me relatively easy access to young South Africans in the form of other students. For these two reasons I chose to limit my sample according to age, and select research participants between the ages of 18 and 25.

Due to financial constraints, I could not hire an interpreter, and so could only interview those who were fluent in English. This imposed a further limitation on the sample, and meant that, in general, those I spoke to were from a relatively affluent socioeconomic background with an education level of at least Matric.

In conducting this research project, it was not my intention to obtain information from which I could to draw generalisations concerning the population of South African youth, or any other social group. Rather, I wished to explore some of the dynamics at play in the imaginative engagement with others enabled by music, and possibly to contribute to a fuller theoretical understanding of the concept of the 'musical imaginary'. With these considerations in mind, I felt that it was more important to select research participants who were willing to talk at length about their experiences and opinions with regard to South African music than to attempt to obtain a 'representative' sample. For this reason, I went to some of the bigger classes at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and asked for interested participants. My sample snowballed through the contacts given to me by some of these individuals. Friends also put me in touch with suitable participants with whom they were familiar. In addition, I visited a number of retail music shops to ask for willing interviewees.

Before I begin the discussion of my findings, I wish to make a number of things clear about my approach to conducting the interviews. Firstly, I wanted to avoid reifying categories of 'race'. For this reason, I asked interviewees whether they would classify themselves racially, and if so, how. This question elicited some puzzled expressions, demonstrating the extent to which the racialisation of subjects in South Africa has come to be regarded by people as natural and self-evident.

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[2] During the course of the research, I found that music could in fact be linked to 'race' at many levels, but that the discourses surrounding genres were generally less ambiguous and/or complex than those constructing the meanings of musical sounds, for example.

In the interviews, I attempted to make transparent variables of gender, religion, ethnic group, educational level, and home language in order to maintain an awareness of the possible impact of such identifications on music-listening practices. In general, I did not find any significant impact of these variables on the responses of research participants. However, there were a few instances in which one or more of these factors impacted on the listener's reception of the music, which I have highlighted in the analysis that follows. For the convenience of the reader, I have compiled a list of the interviewees in an appendix to this thesis, including their racial classification and other general information about them.

It is also necessary to make a few points about the use of terms in the interviews and in the discussion that follows. As I mentioned above, I chose to focus this analysis around particular genres of South African popular music. For this reason, some of the interview questions related specifically to my selected genres. However, I wanted to avoid artificially restricting interviewees' tastes to a limited number of genres. For this reason, I began the interview with the open-ended question of "what South African music do you listen to?" Some responded with reference to genres, while some named particular artists. In either case, I proceeded by asking questions to discover how these listening practices were involved in imagining racial and/or national identity. For this reason, I have divided my discussion into sections dealing with tastes classified according to genre (Chapters 2 to 5), and sections dealing with tastes cutting across generic boundaries (Chapters 6 and 7). Some interviewees asked me what I meant by 'South African music,' to which I responded that I used the term to include any music composed or performed by a South African. From this inclusive definition, participants were free to apply the term as narrowly or widely as they wished. The same was true for the terms 'South African jazz' and 'South African rock'. If such a term came up in the interview, and the research participant asked me what I meant by it, I gave the most inclusive possible definition to leave room for the research participant's understanding of the term. When research participants used these terms, I tried to ascertain the definition they were applying. The result is that in the sections discussing the discourses of South African rock and South African jazz, some of the comments quoted are about music that sounds distinctively

South African, whereas others refer to anything within the genre played or composed by a South African. I have tried to make this distinction clear in these sections.
In addition to the in-depth interviews, I held ten follow-up interviews with willing and available research participants during which I played them four taped examples of each of my chosen genres. My aim was to compare the meanings and associations of genres with the meanings and associations of the musical sounds classified as belonging to those genres. Prior to choosing examples for the tape, I asked all research participants who classified themselves as fans of one of my selected genres to suggest tracks and/or artists that, in their opinion, would provide a general idea of the range of styles incorporated by their favoured genre to someone unfamiliar with the music. I found a fair amount of overlap in the tracks and artists suggested for each genre. I also inspected which artists and tracks were included on CD compilations classified according to kwaito, South African rock and South African jazz. From the list compiled from these two sources, I chose tracks for the tape according to my access to the material, which was determined by whether or not I could find someone willing to lend me a CD with the track or artist on it.

Some research participants asked that their real name not be mentioned in my thesis, and so some of the names used in the analysis are pseudonyms.

In his introduction to his study of metal rock and jazz, which is based partially based on in-depth interviews, Harris Berger suggests that "[t]he interpretation of social experience is a social process; in ethnographic dialogue the fieldworker and the research participant can work together to bring experience into focus" (Berger 1999: 24). In order to make this dialogue from which my analysis is drawn as clear as possible, I have quoted from the interviews extensively. Although, inevitably, my subjective choices have determined what is heard and what is silent, in including portions of the original interviews, I hope to have created, as far as possible, a multivocal text, in which my own perspective as researcher co-exists with those of my research participants.

The analysis and discussion of these interviews is structured according to the following issues. In Chapter 2, I examine the dominant discourses articulating racial group to music genre that were evident in the interviews, and I also explore the role of individual agency in critiquing and internalising these discourses. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I discuss the specific discourses surrounding the genres of kwaito, South African rock, and South African jazz in more detail and analyze the various ways in which those research participants who accepted the validity of these discourses made use of them in processes of self-identification. In Chapter 6, I explore how music was involved in imagining the nation of South Africa. In Chapter 7, I address the complex issue of the role of music in transforming identities and modes of social interaction; I analyse the perceptions of research participants, and attempt to use this analysis to expand on some current academic writing on the question of social change in multicultural societies. In Chapter 8, I conclude with some final thoughts on the possible contribution of a project such as this to theorising the dynamics of the 'musical imaginary' in processes of identity construction. This thesis is appended by the above-mentioned list of interviewees, as well as by a list of bands and artists to which reference is made by myself or the research participants during the course of the discussion that follows. This appendix includes a short description of the bands/artists and their music.

# Chapter 2:
# The Dissemination, Interpretation, and Internalisation of Dominant Discourses of Music and 'Race' in South Africa

In order to understand who or what individual listeners imagine through music, it is necessary to understand the discourses connecting music with social groups. For this reason, my first goal in interviewing my research participants was to distinguish the discourses constructing the relationship between 'race' and music genre that informed their discussion of South African music. If one accepts that dominant discourses shape the musical imagining of listeners, then in order to address the question as to how music may allow listeners to reinforce existing identities or to imagine new ones, it is necessary to examine how dominant discourses of music and 'race' are disseminated, and how these discourses are interpreted and internalised by individual South Africans. In order to address these issues, I started by asking my interviewees directly if they were aware of any stereotypes in South Africa regarding the musical tastes of racial groups, and if they were, how they felt these stereotypes were spread. Some of those interviewed believed that these stereotypes, although often reductive, are based in fact, whereas others agreed that they exist as constructs in the social imagination, but felt that they are no longer accurate, as social division between racial groups in South Africa is slowly being eroded. In order to account for this variation in my analysis, I asked interviewees how they formed their personal impressions of who listens to what in South Africa. This allowed me to examine how individuals become aware of dominant discourses, how they interpret these in light of their own lived experiences, and how these two processes impact on their internalisation of these discourses as reflections of social fact, or their rejection of them as a distortion of reality. By analysing the responses to these questions, I was also able to detect various channels through which discourses linking music genre to racial group are disseminated. In this chapter, I wish to focus mainly on these processes of dissemination, and the role of individual agency in verifying and internalising these discourses. In Chapter 3, I will discuss in more detail the specific discourses surrounding my three

chosen genres, and the ways in which research participants engaged with these discourses.

Although there was a degree of consensus among my research participants regarding what music genres various 'races' in South Africa listen to, I was struck by the lack of agreement on certain issues. For example, while all agreed that there are stereotypes concerning what blacks and whites listen to, they were less sure about Indians and coloureds[3]. The most prevalent stereotype about what constitutes 'Indian music' was Indian 'traditional' music, and the music that is played on Lotus FM, a South African radio station catering for the "progressive South African Indian community" (http://www.sabc.co.za). Other perceptions of the stereotype of 'Indian music' included rave and rock, but many interviewees expressed an uncertainty regarding the listening tastes of Indians. For example, Tina appended her long and otherwise comprehensive list of stereotypes regarding the listening preferences of racial groups in South Africa with the comment, "No one knows what the Indians listen to". Similarly, there was disagreement among research participants as to whether or not stereotypes exist in the minds of South Africans regarding the listening preferences of coloureds. When asked whether she was aware of stereotypes concerning the listening habits of racial groups in South Africa, Linda immediately mentioned stereotypes of 'black music' and 'white music'. When I asked her whether she was aware of stereotypes concerning coloureds and Indians, she answered, "I don't know [laughing]. See, that's the scary thing, because not everything is black and white, you know". Others felt that there exists a commonly held perception in South African society that genres such as hip hop, R&B and rap constitute 'coloured music'. However, others classified these three genres as 'black', whereas two participants expressed the opinion that R&B is 'Indian music'.

[3] Although I phrased the question in such a way as not to dictate racial classifications to my research participants and to allow them to use their own categories, all of those interviewed used the classifications of 'black', 'white', 'Indian' and 'coloured'. It is likely that this is due to the reification of these 'races' through apartheid and post-apartheid official classifications (Posel 2001). Often, interviewees would only mention stereotypes regarding 'black' and 'white' listening preferences. In these cases, I prompted them by asking whether they are aware of stereotypes regarding Indians and coloureds. I chose to use these labels to allow for comparison with other research participants.

Although interviewees were generally convinced that stereotypical ideas about the listening preferences of blacks and whites do exist in South African society, there was disagreement concerning the content of these stereotypes. In particular, conflicting opinions existed regarding which genres constitute the stereotype of 'white music' and 'black music'. The most frequently mentioned stereotype was that blacks in South Africa listen to kwaito. Other genres considered stereotypically 'black' by some of those interviewed were rap, hip hop, R&B, soul, house and gospel. In contrast to the classification, by some, of hip hop and house as 'black music', others felt that these two genres had an audience sufficiently mixed to make impossible their inclusion in stereotypes about music and 'race'. The most frequently mentioned stereotype for 'white music' was rock, but other 'white' genres mentioned were pop, rave, and heavy metal. There were also those individuals who pointed out that dominant ideas about who listens to what in South Africa do not just involve 'race', but also class and age. For example, one interviewee pointed out that according to the stereotype, young blacks listen to kwaito, R&B and hip hop, whereas older (middle- to upper-class) blacks listen to Ringo Madlingozi and jazz, and blacks of all ages in the townships listen to gospel.

In this way, it can be seen that there were varying degrees of consensus regarding the articulation of music genre to racial group. Whereas general agreement existed on some issues – for example, no one linked the genre of kwaito to any group other than black listeners, and no one linked the genre of heavy metal to any group other than white listeners – other genres of music were involved in various contradictory discursive constructions: the genre of hip hop, for example, was classified by different interviewees as stereotypically black, stereotypically coloured, and as racially unmarked. I will return to this issue of the varying degree of consensus concerning stereotypes of music genre and 'race' at the end of this chapter. Before I do so, I would like to discuss the factors implicated in the construction and maintenance of dominant discourses concerning who listens to what in South Africa.

As I mentioned above, research participants adopted one of two approaches to discussing stereotypes regarding the listening habits of racial groups: some spoke about these

stereotypes as a reasonably accurate reflection of reality, while others regarded them as defunct social constructions. Discussions underpinned by either of these opinions provided material from which the factors involved in the dissemination of dominant discourses could be extracted. However, these factors were revealed in slightly different ways. For those who considered stereotypes as a reasonably accurate reflection of reality, various factors were mentioned as providing evidence for the existence of racial division in music taste, as well as contributing to the continuation of such division. Among those who spoke about stereotypes as social constructions, factors were mentioned as evidence for the presence of stereotypes regarding 'race' and music at an ideological level in South African society. I will attempt to highlight these differences throughout my discussion of the answers of research participants, in order to make clear the grounds on which the analysis is based.

## Radio and the media

Many of those interviewed mentioned the marketing of South African radio stations towards a specific racial group as a factor contributing to the dissemination of stereotypes concerning 'race' and taste in music. Some also interpreted this marketing strategy as playing a role in perpetuating divisions in the listening preferences of racial groups. Shashi provides an example of the latter interpretation:

**MR: How do you think we form our impressions of who listens to what?**

**Shashi: Media, definitely, especially radio, because a radio [station] will target a very specific community with very, very specific music. Is it the community that likes the music or the radio station defining the taste? I think the latter.**

In this comment, she interprets the marketing of radio stations to specific racial groups as playing an active role in constructing divisions in music taste. Nosipho also posited a link between the advertising tactics of radio stations and the articulation of music to a particular racial group:

**I think [labelling music in terms of race] is the mistake that a lot of radio stations make...It's a mistake to do that because then you exclude such a large proportion of the population that could enjoy that kind of music...There's this advert on Metro,**

**something about being black, and this type of music, and "I enjoy this type of music", and stuff like that. There's this whole connotation of being black and listening to Metro. And it shouldn't be about that.**

She clearly felt that the racial targeting of radio stations contributes not only to the racial labelling of music, but also plays a causal role in dividing music tastes along racial lines – people who are not black *are excluded* from the 'ideal audience' of the music played on Metro. She mentioned as evidence for this opinion her experience of listening to 5FM while growing up. She explained how, as a teenager, she considered 5FM to be a 'white' station because it didn't play any 'black music'. Because of this label, she rejected the station and the type of music it played. In this way, the racial targeting of radio stations, coupled with the division in genres included on the playlists according to those labelled 'white' and those labelled 'black', reinforced her perception of the racial division in listening preferences, and perpetuated that division.

Zama also felt that the playlists of radio stations contribute to stereotypes about 'black music' and 'white music':

**If you listen to Metro, I haven't heard them once play Bon Jovi, and if it's R&B it's black R&B. I wake up in the morning and listen to R&B, and not once do they play any white music, or music by a white person, unless that person plays music that is similar to that played by blacks. Like for example they play Pink, because she plays R&B and she sounds like a black artist, but I've never heard them play Bon Jovi or something from Westlife. And if you listen to East Coast, it's basically just Westlife and that. I was thinking about it when I was at home, and I was listening to Jacaranda, they played a Whitney Houston duet, "I know him so well", but they play the cover version done by these other two white ladies[4]. So they usually play white cover versions of black musicians.**

In this way the genres and 'race' of the artists played reinforce the labelling of Metro as a 'black station', or East Coast Radio and Jacaranda as 'white stations', and, in so doing, concurrently reinforce the racial labelling of the genres played by each.

Many of the research participants mentioned the role of other sorts of media in perpetuating stereotypes about the music tastes of racial groups in South Africa. In

[4] I was unable to identify the version to which she was referring.

particular, the use of stereotypes in advertising, as well as the racial targeting of TV music shows were mentioned.

For example, Jamiel mentioned how TV advertisements such as the one for internet service provider Polka.co.za indirectly reinforce stereotypes of Indian young men listening to music with a heavy bass and beat. In the advert, an Indian mechanic with a heavy Indian accent is depicted, his speech punctuated with clichés such as 'an'all', working on his car while talking to a friend. Jamiel interpreted this as a portrayal of an Indian 'souping up' his car's sound system:

**Like, I don't know if you've seen the...Polka advert, with the Indian guys. I mean what does that say? ...because I mean, you look at an Indian guy's car, what is the first thing you see? You see rims, you hear sound, you know it's souped up, it sounds nice and loud. And it's probably going to be that he's going to play something that has a lot of bass to show off the speakers.**

Devasha also expressed a dislike of what she felt was a perpetuation of stereotypes regarding Indian listening tastes on a South African television series called *The Res*. In the program, rock music was portrayed as the music of rebellion for young Indian people, as the young female Indian character listened to rock as part of her attempt to break away from the control of her mother, who

**would listen to Indian music, and she'd be dressed up, you know, all Indian, with a sari and these big earrings. And I mean, in every day life, Indian people don't do that, they wear normal clothes like normal people.**

Tina also mentioned how TV music programs can contribute to constructing stereotypes of the music of black South African youth through the selection of music played on the show, and the behaviour of the host:

**I remember this TV show hosted by Bob Mabena. I remember the one time, it was one of the strangest episodes, they played Bon Jovi, "Something for the Pain", and I think Bob himself was shocked, 'cause at the end he was like, "that was a strange song"...I remember it because it was one of the few white music videos that were played on that program...So I also think that has a lot to do with what you expect 'your people' to listen to, because of those TV programs, because they're generally very, "yes, this is for...the black youth of South Africa".**

Devasha and Tina also mentioned music videos as contributing to the construction of an 'ideal audience' for a particular genre defined according to various factors, including 'race'. They both mentioned the music videos of kwaito artists featuring scenes from township life, and focusing on images such as GP license plates[5], as locating the genre of kwaito in South Africa, and specifically in the South African township, constructing the 'ideal audience' of the genre as black South African township residents.

**Identity of the artist and the content of lyrics**

The image and racial identity of the artist, as well as the subject matter of the lyrics were mentioned by some interviewees as contributing to the racial labelling of certain genres, as well as to the division of listening preferences along racial lines. For example, Janice expressed the opinion that because rock musicians in South Africa tend to be white, the genre has acquired the label of 'white music', and people who are not white feel the music is not directed at them, and thus choose not to listen to it. Natasha expressed a similar opinion. She mentioned that she feels that kwaito and R&B are stereotypically classified as 'black music', and I asked her:

**MR: How do you think people form ideas about black people listening to kwaito or R&B?**

**N: Well, the people who sing it. Rock you would think it's a white domain because white boys sing it. With kwaito, black boys sing it, Indian artists, Indians sing it.**

Tina expanded on this view by pointing out that not only are almost all kwaito artists black, they emphasise their personal histories as being situated in the township, and express goals and aspirations informed by that background. In her words, their lyrics detail

**where I'm coming from, type of thing, where I'm at, where I've been, where I wanna be, that type of thing. [The musicians have a] very iconic status, they all have their little stories, like where M'du comes from, and where Trompies come from, like the fact that one of the Trompies guys has this huge yellow Mercedes but he lives in a squatter camp.**

[5] 'GP' appears on South African motor vehicle license plates to indicate that the vehicle has been registered in the Gauteng Province.

Tina explained that by doing this, kwaito artists construct themselves as role models for youth coming from a similar township background, and contribute to the label of kwaito as music for black people from the township.

Other interviewees expressed similar views about the identity of kwaito artists and the content of their lyrics constructing a particular 'ideal audience'. Ntatho explained that the lyrics of kwaito tend to be didactic,

**[telling] the 'roughies' from the location[6], lah lah lah, you won't find anything sitting in a corner smoking your *zol* [marijuana], get up and find a job. Stuff like that, but you can dance to it, but still, you gain stuff from it.**

It is clear from this statement that she sees kwaito as being 'addressed' to a particular audience from a disadvantaged township background, thus strengthening the construction of kwaito as a 'township genre'.

Other genres were also mentioned as having a particular racialised 'ideal audience' constructed through the lyrical content of their songs and the identity and image of their artists. For example, Anne expressed an unequivocal dislike of South African rock music, which she saw as representing an isolated white identity, insulated from the social realities of post-apartheid South Africa. When I asked her to expand on the ways in which she believes bands portray such an identity, she replied:

**In South Africa I think...there's been a lot of anger [expressed in rock music], and people don't like white anger ... It's the whole message, the way they dress, the kind of things they say...one doesn't hear them actually try and reach out.**

Nosipho felt that the subject matter of South African rock and rock music in general expresses a particularly 'white' approach to life, which she described as "introspective". Listening to "Bubblegum on My Boots" by Springbok Nude Girls, she immediately commented that the song was a good example of 'white music'. I asked her what distinguished it as 'white music', and she replied:

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[6] 'Location' is an alternative term for the township.

**I think it's too introspective, like all the questions, like "what's wrong with me"? Blah blah blah, [black people would say] like, "why, why are they always asking those questions, 'what's wrong with me'", you know?**

This comment is interesting in that it demonstrates how discourses labelling certain music according to 'race' intersect and interact with other social discourses defining the experience of 'being black', in this case, a particular psychological approach to life. In this statement, Nosipho interprets the 'white approach' to life expressed in the song as perpetuating racial division in listening tastes, as black people would not identify with the lyrics.

Two research participants also mentioned the history of genres as influencing the stereotype of which racial group would listen to them, or as perpetuating an audience defined along racial lines. Anne felt that the historical association of rock music with white people in South Africa during apartheid has contributed to its current label of 'white music'. Ntatho felt that the origin of kwaito in the townships contributes to a situation in which black South Africans, and black people from the townships in particular, are more likely to listen to the genre than any other racial group in South Africa.

**Social discourse**

Another important way in which research participants became aware of racial stereotypes concerning taste in music was through what people around them said about particular genres of music, and through the reaction of others to their own listening preferences, or to those of their friends. For example, when I asked Linda, a black female who enjoys South African rock music, how she thinks stereotypes about who listens to what in South Africa are spread, she replied:

**Because it's always a matter of, you know, people are always saying, "*umamela umculo wabalungu*", which means, "you're listening to white people's music", all those guitars and all those drums, and what is it with all that screaming? Like you know, it's so white, and I'm like, how, so just because some white person is singing it? and other people go, "kwaito is black, and it's so ghetto and it's so township",**

**you know. "It's so tribal" and whatever. Just because some black person is going on on a microphone about, whatever, cars and girls.**

An interesting difference in interpretation may be detected here between interviewees such as Natasha and Anne, and Linda. Natasha and Anne assumed unquestioningly that if the artists of a particular genre were generally all of the same 'race', listeners who are not of that 'race' would feel excluded and not want to listen to the music. For Linda, on the other hand, the fact that "some white person" is singing rock is not sufficient reason to dismiss it as having no value for a black person. Linda continues to explain people's reaction to her enjoyment of 'white music':

**I listen to a lot of different types of music that most black people or whatever wouldn't want to listen to. Then it's like, "you listen to white music, clearly you have identity issues and clearly you're a coconut, like, black people don't listen to rock".**

For Linda, people's reactions to her listening choices perpetuate racialised labels of music. Similarly, for research participants David S. and Khaya, divisions in listening preferences and the labelling of genres according to 'race' are shaped by what people say about music. David explains how he has always thought of rock as 'white music', because of how his brothers used to react when they heard the music:

**I think that stereotype for me came from, like, what people would say growing up. Whenever rock 'n' roll would come on TV, my brothers would say, "put that white music off".**

Khaya, like Linda, is a black person who enjoys rock music. He agreed that the labelling of rock as 'white music' among the majority of his black friends may be explained in terms of what they hear people saying about the music:

**I know lots of black people that could relate to heavy rock if they listened, and they just gave it time, but you [as a black person] become stuck in the idea of "it's all just noise", and you never take time to look beyond what people are telling you.**

Zama also mentioned how she only became aware that some of the music she listens to (Cliff Richard's music, in particular) is not 'black people's music' when her friends reacted in bewilderment to hearing her play the music. Prior to that she didn't think

anything of it, as her father had listened to Cliff Richard when she was young. She mentioned that two of her black friends have had similar experiences:

**Two of my friends, their whole collection is rock. And one of the told me, when their friends come and find them listening to this, they were like, "are you crazy?"**

**Social environment in which the music is experienced**

The final factor that research participants mentioned as being important to how stereotypes about 'race' and music are disseminated, and to how they personally have formed their impressions of who listens to what in South Africa, was the social environments in which they have experienced the music. It became clear that such experiences could either confirm or refute the impressions received from other sources, such as radio and the media, regarding who listens to what in South Africa.

Anne expressed the opinion that the predominantly black clientele at clubs that play kwaito music reinforces the label of kwaito as 'black music' (the specific example she mentioned was the club 'Tilt' in Durban, that had a 'kwaito night' every Saturday during the second half of 2003, at which time Anne frequented the club regularly). In the same way, Anne felt that the predominantly white audience at rock concerts contributes to the labelling of rock as 'white music'. To illustrate her point, she provided the further example of the club 'Tiger Tiger', where mainly white people go, and no kwaito is played, further marking the genre as not being 'white music'. Mzi agreed with this interpretation of 'black clubs' playing 'black music' as reinforcing the racial labelling of music, adding that if

**the guys that are DJ's, if maybe they can not just play specifically house, specifically kwaito [at the clubs where mostly black people go], but just play everything, then I think people would get exposed to rock [and other stereotypically 'white' genres].**

In a similar way, when explaining why she classifies kwaito as 'black music', Ntatho mentioned her experience that "when darkies are getting together there's kwaito, one way". Her first memories of kwaito music are situated in the township, where she shared experiences of the music with other black people:

**Kwaito came in around 1993, 1994. And you couldn't help but be exposed to it...Everyone was like, "what's this now? We're making new music, something to call our own, 'kwaito'". Ya, it was just everywhere you turned. And at that time I lived in a location, so every taxi going past is playing a kwaito song, your neighbour is buying the new M'du. Ya, it was cool.**

Khaya made a similar point when he explained how, in his experience, the boundaries of place, 'race' and the music heard in the environment have coincided, and mutually reinforced the labelling of each. For example, he explained how social environment contributes to the labelling of house music as 'black':

**...you walk past a house in Kwamashu or something, and they're all playing house music, and then there's that weird rasta sitting alone in his flat listening to jazz music, and they think, he's weird. You see it everywhere, and you become so used to it, that it becomes a part of you.**

Themba constitutes a further example of how social environment may contribute to the formation of ideas about which racial groups listen to what genre of music in South Africa:

**I mean, that's what I see almost every day, you know. Like here in Durban actually, because it's mixed race, I hear [imitates high-pitched female 'Bollywood' singing] I know this is like Indian music, I know there's going to be Indians in that car. And you hear Hola! [sings] you know that there's a taxi full of black people, and you hear this [imitates guitar line, mimes playing the guitar] this heavy metal you know that it's white people. I mean, it is like that. And it's never disappointed me, I said, "I know who's in the cab, it's got that music in, it's going to be that kind of people".**

However, there were those who referred to experiences that had challenged the stereotypes disseminated through media or through the discourse of friends and family. Many of these experiences involved attending live concerts at which the audience was not composed of the expected racial group. For example, Emcy described attending a rock concert, at which her views about who listens to rock music in South Africa were challenged:

**At the Mr Price 'Pro', [a concert featuring mainly rock bands, sponsored by the clothing franchise Mr Price] what you would see as predominantly 'white listened-to music' – because it's like rock, and it's alternative or whatever – there were like people of all different races there. Indian, black, Chinese, it didn't matter.**

Amanda also mentioned that her ideas about what racial group listens to rock music in South Africa have been modified in response to the changing racial demographic of the audience at 'Burn' (a Durban music venue featuring primarily live performances of South African rock bands):

**I find a lot more black people are coming to 'Burn' as well, slowly but surely, and a lot more Indian people as well, who are actually on the dance floor and enjoying the music.**

Other experiences discussed by research participants involved interactions with individuals whose musical preferences did not conform to the stereotype of their racial group. For example, Zee, who classified himself as black, justified his opinion that in South Africa, one can no longer generalise about a person's music tastes on account of his or her 'race', by referring to one of his black friends who enjoys rock music and heavy metal. He explained that among his friends that share the racial classification 'black', there is no absolute consensus about what constitutes 'cool' music. Because of this, he concludes that one cannot generalise about what music certain 'race' groups listen to. Shashi expressed a similar opinion concerning the diversity of musical tastes found among people of the same 'race':

**Whether I walk into a black or white or Indian res-mate's[7] room I can hear Jimmy Dludlu, hard rock, hardcore hip hop and rap or Miles Davis or classics or Christian rock. I am always flummoxed and constantly surprised these days.**

It seems clear that an individual's interpretation of the dominant discourses linking music genre to racial group depends on the social contexts in which the music has been experienced. The writings of David Rubinstein (2001) provide a theoretical model with which to analyse the relationship between individual interpretation of dominant discourses and social norms, and the contexts in which the applications of such norms are experienced. In his discussion of the role of agency and culture in human action, Rubinstein refers to Wittgenstein's analysis of rule following. In Rubinstein's interpretation, Wittgenstein's theory argues that rules exist only in their practical application, and that any application of a rule within a specific context involves an act of

[7] This term refers to other students living in her university residence.

interpretation, and thus a degree of agency. He provides a number of examples of the role of context in interpreting rules, emphasising the point that rules have no ultimate meaning abstractable from their practical application by actors. However, actors are not free from all constraints to interpret the rule any way they choose; Rubinstein makes the point that throughout his writing, Wittgenstein "emphasises collective activities...as giving meaning to rules" (Rubinstein 2001: 85). Rubinstein then applies this argument to his analysis of the role of individual agency in interpreting and applying cultural norms. I would argue that this model provides a means to theorise the way in which research participants interpreted, internalised and applied norms (or dominant discourses) regarding 'race' and taste in music. The collective social activities through which each participant became aware of dominant discourses linking racial identity and music preference were specific to each individual interviewed. These unique sets of experiences gave each individual a particular range of practical applications of the norms of the listening practices of racial groups, from which interpretations could be drawn.

An example will illustrate this point. Janice, a coloured female student, and Chris, a white male student, are both fans of South African rock music. Janice first heard the music through a friend whom she met while au pairing in the USA, who was also from South Africa. She developed an enjoyment of the South African rock artists whose CDs her friend owned. She still listens to these artists, and new South African rock artists whom she hears on the radio. She has recently become friends with a group of girls at her university who have similar tastes in music, and with whom she discusses South African rock music, and through whom she becomes aware of new bands. She has never been to a live performance of South African rock, as she explained that prior to making friends with the girls at her university, she had no one who would be interested in going to a rock concert with her (her au pairing friend is still in the US). Chris, on the other hand, became a fan of South African rock by going to 'Burn', a local venue featuring South African rock bands, with friends who share his enjoyment of rock music. He has regularly frequented 'Burn' over the last few years, and becomes aware of new bands primarily through hearing them perform live.

Janice and Chris had very different ideas about the demographics of who listens to rock music in South Africa. Janice felt that rock was still played and listened to mainly by white South Africans, as the genre is still played mainly on 'white' radio stations. Also, the friend who introduced her to rock was white, and the group of girls who currently share her enjoyment of rock are also white. None of her coloured friends enjoy the music. On the other hand, Chris expressed the opinion that the racial composition of rock audiences in Durban has changed over the last few years. He supported this belief by referring to the changing racial make up of the clientele at 'Burn', and of the bands that perform there. He expresses an awareness of stereotypes held by South African society in general concerning rock as 'white music', but, in his words, "from the inside, it's not like that anymore". Clearly, the range of contexts in which Janice and Chris have experienced the practical application of the 'rule' of racial listening practices has influenced how they have interpreted and internalised what behaviour constitutes the norm. It is also clear that the contexts in which the music has been experienced by each of them have been influenced by factors beyond their own control. Growing up in a coloured community where none of her friends and family listened to rock music, Janice was unable to build up a social group that shared her taste in music. Consequently, she did not attend live rock concerts, as she did not feel comfortable going alone. Chris, on the other hand, grew up in a white middle-class community where many of his friends listened to rock music, and consequently developed a social group with which he attended live rock concerts. Because of these experiences, he was able to 'filter' the discourses disseminated by radio and media through his own lived experience, and discard the former as an inaccurate portrayal of the listening habits of racial groups in South Africa.

Rubinstein also makes the point that "rules vary in the degree of agency allowed. While room for interpretation remains, 'Thou shalt not steal' imposes sharper constraints than 'Thou shalt honour thy father and mother'" (Rubinstein 2001: 157). Born (1997) makes a similar point in her study of the formation of subjectivities at IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique) in relation to the dominant discourse of musical modernism. She examines particular features of this discourse and the environment in which it was promulgated that made it particularly "successful at

suppressing both difference and change" (Born 1997: 497). Such features include the lack of open debate at IRCAM about the relevance and value of the aesthetic principles of musical modernism, which resulted in "disagreements or uncertainties [being] experienced fragmentedly, as individualized and private doubts" (Born 1997: 494). This situation prevented the collective interrogation, and possible subsequent reformulation, of musical modernism as the dominant discourse at IRCAM. Born points out that among those employees at IRCAM who had "access to alternative socioecomonic networks espousing alternative aesthetics as potential bases for their own work" (Born 1997: 494), greater opposition to the dominant discourses at IRCAM were expressed. These observations may provide insight into the differing ways in which my research participants engaged with dominant discourses of music and 'race' in South Africa. For individuals in environments discursively saturated with a particular articulation of genre to racial group (Janice would be an example of this), doubts about the validity of the discourse are experienced in isolation. Without any sharing of these doubts with other subjects, the possibility for their collective affirmation does not exist. Thus individuals are more likely to accept the discourse as true. However, those with access to alternative discursive frameworks, such as Chris, had a space from which to critique dominant discourses, and possibly to reject them.

This application of the arguments of Rubinstein and Born goes some way to explaining the lack of consensus in classifying certain genres according to 'race' mentioned earlier in this chapter. One may conclude that although dominant discursive constructions of the relationship between certain musical genres and certain racial groups do exist in South Africa, and are disseminated through agents such as radio, the media, and social relationships, the way in which individuals interpret and internalise such discourses is not homogeneous. Although the social dimension of norms constrains their interpretation to some extent, the variety of social contexts in which such norms are applied by various actors provides a range of options on which individual listeners may draw in their interpretations. However, each individual has a particular configuration of social experiences of the music from which to draw, influenced by their social and personal background. These configurations impact on whether or not individuals have access to

alternative discourses of music and 'race', and thus on the likelihood of their challenging the validity of dominant discursive constructions. I will now turn to some specific examples of how individual listeners engaged with dominant discourses of 'race' and genre in South Africa.

# Chapter 3:
# Examining the Discourses of Kwaito

In the previous chapter, I distinguished between two different interpretations of dominant discourses regarding the listening preferences of racial groups: those who felt that these ideas are a reasonably accurate portrayal of reality, and those who rejected their current validity, protesting that 'things are changing'. Among those who felt that dominant discourses are grounded in reality, two variations could be detected. On the one hand, there were research participants who took it for granted that these discourses are a direct reflection of experience in South Africa. On the other, there were those who problematised the stereotypes as a reduction of lived experience, but who acknowledged that they stem from a real-life division of music tastes along racial lines. In this chapter and in Chapters 4 and 5, I will discuss how those who accepted the dominant discourses linking genre to social group either as unproblematically true, or as based to some extent on social reality, engaged with these articulations in various ways. I will structure my discussion according to the genres of kwaito, South African jazz, and South African rock. In each of these chapters, I will discuss the specific discourses linking genre to racial and social group. Furthermore, by discussing the interviews in which research participants listened to and spoke about musical examples, I hope to illustrate how these discourses linking 'race' to genre are complexified when the object of discussion is the musical sounds of particular tracks classified as belonging to one of the three selected genres.

## Listening to the discourses of kwaito

In Chapter 2, I discussed various factors involved in the dissemination of the discourse constructing kwaito as 'black music' and, more exclusively, as 'music for black people from the township'. By playing interviewees my four taped examples of kwaito music, I was able to examine how specific musical sounds become implicated in these, and other, discourses of social difference for listeners. By analysing comments made in relation to specific tracks, it became clear that many subgeneric discourses are present around the

sounds collectively labelled 'kwaito'. These concerned not only 'race' and geographic location, but also categories such as age.

When asked who would listen to the tracks, respondents expressed a general consensus that the audience of kwaito is determined primarily by 'race', although many people qualified this answer with reference to other variables such as age. In justifying their claim that kwaito is 'black music', some respondents mentioned specific musical features that mark the music racially. For example, Vumani commented that kwaito music in general has prominent bass and drums, and this is a feature it shares with other 'black music'. Janice felt that young black people would listen to "Oyi! Oyi!" by Arthur, the first kwaito track on the tape that I played for interviewees, as it has what she called an "ethnic" beat, which she defined as two different rhythms being played simultaneously. She explained that black people would be able to dance to such a beat, whereas people from other 'races' would not. A less "distracting" rhythm was one of the features Janice mentioned as a reason for her assessment that both blacks and coloureds would listen to "Waar Was Jy?" ("Where Were You?") by Skeem, the second kwaito track on the tape. She also mentioned the use of the Afrikaans language as contributing to the construction of coloureds as part of a community of listeners invoked by the song. In Janice's words, "they say 'Waar was jy?', and that's a very coloured thing to say in terms of the slang. Afrikaans is our slang." On the other hand, Tina felt that mainly young blacks would listen to "Waar Was Jy?" because it makes musical reference to popular songs from the 80s by black artists such as Ray Phiri and Stimela. Tina felt that many young blacks would listen to the song out of a sense of nostalgia for the music of their childhood and adolescence. Linda and Zama both mentioned the song's intertextuality as one of the reasons they enjoyed it, but Nosipho was not aware of the references at all, and enjoyed the song because she likes the group's vocalist, Ishmael.

There was also a distinction between 'old kwaito' and 'new kwaito' drawn by those I interviewed, mainly by those who described themselves as fans of the genre. For example, "Oyi! Oyi!" was dismissed by Ntatho, Tina, Lenny, Nosipho and Zama as 'old kwaito'. They all agreed that no one they could think of would listen to that sort of

kwaito anymore. Zama explained that the aesthetic of kwaito has changed since the time when the Arthur track was popular:

**The quality has improved so much, it's so different. Like if you listen to Zola, it's totally different. The message has changed, it's not just like repeating a few silly words that don't make sense, there's more music, like instruments, and they've upgraded the production.**

She explained that this is why she likes "O Suna Mang" ("Who Are You Kissing?") by M'du, the third kwaito track on the tape: it includes saxophone which made the track seem like a more an "authentic piece of work". Linda also classified "Oyi! Oyi!" as 'old kwaito', characterised by its repetitive lyrics and female backup singers. Those who were outsiders to the kwaito scene did not make any distinction between "Oyi! Oyi!" and the other kwaito tracks, classifying them all as music listened to by younger black people.

"Shesa Mpama"[8] by Senyaka, the fourth kwaito track on the tape, and "O Suna Mang" seemed to have a degree of crossover appeal for those interviewed. The white interviewees, who were not kwaito fans themselves, classified "Shesa Mpama" as appealing to younger black people. However, Janice classified the track as appealing mainly to a black audience, but also having a significant coloured following. She explained that even though the majority of coloured people don't understand the language of the lyrics, they enjoy the song because it's "funny", it has a funny dance and music video, and Senyaka portrays an amusing persona. Zama and Linda agreed with Janice's assessment, saying this track appealed to people who did not normally listen to kwaito. Zama added that she could imagine this track being played at a 'white club'. Lenny, Tina, and Ntatho agree that Senyaka's appeal transcends the boundaries of kwaito, and that people would still listen to it today because it's "too rude to go out of fashion".

With regard to "O Suna Mang", various social boundaries were blurred in the audience imagined by those interviewed. George felt that "yuppies" of all racial groups would listen to the track, because of the "good production" relative to other kwaito he has heard, and because of the beat, although he couldn't explain what it was about the beat that gave

[8] Roughly translated as 'to slap someone in the face'.

the track its cross-racial appeal. Ntatho agreed that the track doesn't mark itself as 'from the township', or as 'black', although she also couldn't pinpoint what features contributed to this unmarked quality. Janice agreed that people of all 'races' would listen to "O Suna Mang". She explained that she came to this conclusion because of the similarity between the track and the music performed by one of the characters on the TV soap *Backstage*. On the show, the audience at the club where the character performs is racially mixed, and Janice speculates that watching this show has influenced her non-racial classification of M'du's music. Tina agreed that "O Suna Mang" transcends 'race', but also felt that it transcends class, because people living in both the suburbs and the townships would listen to it. Lenny echoed this opinion, explaining that the track would appeal to a middle-class audience as well as to township listeners, because it's a "more advanced stage" of kwaito, which incorporates aspects of house.

Most of those interviewed believed that the kwaito tracks would appeal more to a younger audience, because of the beat, which makes the music suitable for dancing. Some, such as Janice, felt certain beats were more 'danceable' than others. Similarly, Devasha classified the Arthur, Senyaka and M'du as "dancing kwaito", but felt that "Waar Was Jy?" is more "soulful" kwaito which one would not dance to, but rather listen to as background music.

It can be seen that various broader discourses of music and 'race' informed the perceptions and assessments of the research participants. For example, Janice's interpretation of the rhythmic complexity she hears in "Oyi! Oyi!" as something that would appeal to blacks, as only they would be able to dance to it, has clearly been shaped by a discourse that "[constructs] African rhythm as complex, superior, yet ultimately incomprehensible", a notion that "has by now assumed the status of a commonplace" (Agawu 2003: 55). Also, it seems likely that Vumani's comment labelling a heavy bass and rhythm as a characteristic of black music has been influenced by ideas of a black South African aesthetic which is "distinguished by the weight…and drive at the bottom of a musical mix" (Meintjies 2003: 113). Finally, notions of the relative unimportance of sophisticated technological production to the aesthetic of an authentic 'African sound',

which stresses the importance of sounding live and unmediated (Meintjies 2003) is evident in George's comment that the superior production of "O Suna Mang" by M'du would extend the audience beyond the (black) racial boundaries marked by kwaito that has less sophisticated sound production.

It is also clear that in contrast to the relatively straightforward social and racial discourses of the genre of kwaito, at the level of individual tracks the imagined audience is more open to interpretation. It can be seen that in a particular track, various levels exist at which musical meaning may be negotiated – including musical sounds and rhythms, lyrics, persona of the artist, and visual images linked to the music via music videos. In imagining an audience, certain of these levels may be brought more sharply into focus while the importance of others is de-emphasised. This is evident, for example, in the contrasting interpretations made by Janice and Tina of who would listen to the track "Waar Was Jy?": by focusing on the language of the lyrics, Janice could include coloured people in the imagined audience, whereas by focusing on musical references, Tina drew boundaries around an exclusively black audience. The social position of interviewees relative to the discourses of kwaito also influenced their interpretations; 'insiders' who had knowledge of the artists and history of the genre constructed the audience of particular tracks in a more specific, detailed way than those who were 'outsiders' to the genre. For the latter, the group dictated by the dominant generic discourses provided their stock answer for who would listen to all the kwaito tracks: black South Africans.

**Engaging with the discourses of kwaito**

It should be clear from the above discussion that multiple discourses surround the musical sounds classified as kwaito. However, in the interviews in which no music was played, research participants generally discussed the discourses of kwaito as a genre, rather than those concerning specific tracks. These generic discourses of kwaito may be understood as providing a relatively stable framework within which individual listeners may negotiate their relationship to the genre, and to the social and racial group that it is believed to represent.

For some research participants who are not black, the construction of kwaito as 'black' music allowed them to negotiate their relationship with an imagined 'black South Africa'. For example, listening to kwaito for Colin allowed him to imagine himself as a white person situated in Africa alongside black Africans, sharing a country, but orientated by different cultural systems, ways of life, and histories. This is evident in the distinction he made between the way he as a white South African listens to kwaito, and how he imagines black South Africans would listen to it. He describes how he occasionally listens to the music for some variety:

**Sometimes rock and bop and hip hop get a bit boring and they usually have the same kind of beat. So I like [listening to kwaito] 'cause it's diverse. Refreshing. [But] there's also a limit to how much I can listen to that kind of music, like kwaito and stuff, because a lot of it's in Zulu, Xhosa, and I obviously don't understand those languages.**

He mentions that he feels that kwaito is 'targeted' at black people, and that black South Africans listen to kwaito in a particular way because it's 'their' music:

**Well, a lot of South African music is also targeted to the - I don't know if it's racialistic to say this - to the black people. You know, like Pitch Black Afro and Skwatta Kamp and things like that, um, they've created their own type of genre, you know, kwaito and that...they're starting to create their own identities, not only individual [identities], but saying "hey, I'm proud to be black".**

It is clear from this comment that he interprets the production of music such as kwaito – and by implication, the act of listening to it – as an affirmation of racial pride. He continues to explain that black people from disadvantaged areas would identify with the artists in a way that he as a middle-class white person would not:

**I think...[black kwaito fans] see those people as maybe a representation of themselves. They identify with those artists. [Like] Mandoza. People see him as a huge role model...especially from the undeveloped areas.**

He emphasises that he does not feel alienated by the 'targeting' of kwaito at black South Africans, as he is aware that the majority of South Africans (and Africans) are black:

**MR: Do you find that [the targeting of kwaito towards black people] influences how you feel about the music at all, because you're not in the group being targeted?**

**Colin: Not really, because I understand that the majority is black.**

**MR: You mean in South Africa?**

**Colin: Ya, in South Africa, and, ya, because I don't know, I guess the South African music is also listened to in other African countries.**

Later on in the interview Colin names being South African and being African as two labels with which he feels a strong identification. Thus his choice not to feel alienated by his perception that kwaito is a 'black genre' may be interpreted as an act of identifying himself as belonging in South Africa, and in Africa, a place where the majority is black.

Anne provides a further example of a white South African listening to kwaito as part of the process of negotiating a relationship with black South Africans, and of placing herself as a white person within Africa. She explained that she enjoys going to clubs that play kwaito music, because the environment is one of the few in Durban where the demographics are representative of South Africa: majority black with a few whites, coloureds and Indians:

**I like the scene that goes with [kwaito]. Often it's the only place in Durban that you can find people mixing and dancing together. If you go to 'Tilt' on a Saturday, there's a lot of black people and a lot of kwaito. Whereas at white rock concerts there just seems to be so little integration...There are more black people than white [at kwaito venues], but I think that's more realistic to where we are, hey. There's...more mixing, but it is still more black dominated. But that's more a reflection of where we are, we're in Africa, and you go around to Musgrave [mall] and places and sometimes you can forget where we are.**

Experiencing this feeling of being located in Africa in environments such as 'Tilt' could be interpreted as providing an antidote to the displacement and alienation Anne associates with contemporary white South Africa, which she described as having little sense of community:

**MR: Do you see yourself as belonging to any group identity?**

**Anne: I think we're all struggling with that, I mean being a white South African, it's such a boring society sometimes, there's not much sense of community – well English speaking white South Africans, I don't know what it's like to be in other groups, I haven't been there. You know if you're a Zulu, maybe you have**

**something, a greater sense of community, I don't know. Sometimes [as a white South African] you feel displaced because you're not the same as your ancestors from England or wherever. You've had different experiences, I mean, I've been here three or four generations. Three generations in Durban. And yet...I don't know anyone or have like a real sense of...who I am.**

In contrast to Colin and Anne, Jamiel and Bronwyn expressed attitudes towards kwaito that marked a sense of difference from black South Africans, and alienation and dislike in Bronwyn's case. Jamiel made the following comment:

**...people who listen to, I don't know, kwaito or something, I mean that's directly related to them in the sense that they see what's occurring in the song every day, it's like common knowledge to them, so obviously they would sway more towards that music more than they would towards rock.**

The implication is that his choice not to listen to kwaito stems from his ignorance of the experiences it describes. In this way, his interpretation of the motivation of black South Africans to listen to kwaito marks his own feeling being different from them.

In Bronwyn's case, her feelings of alienation from and scorn of black South Africans and what she considers to be their music is blatantly obvious. She first expresses her racist beliefs about black South Africans (despite her disclaimer to the contrary):

**I'm not racist or anything, but most of the black people overseas are more...civilised, decent if you could call it that. There's a big difference between black and white people, that's obvious, but overseas, they just do things the way...normal people do, I suppose the way white people do it, the way you'd like them to do it. But here they're more...they grow up differently, they're not the same, they don't understand things the same. Maybe it's the language, they don't understand the language so well. I don't know...most of them just seem *dof* [dim] to me sometimes.**

This construction of blacks in South Africa as a bewildering and alien other is echoed in her comments about kwaito, coupled with an obvious frustration and a sense of exclusion from the meanings of the music:

**Bronwyn: I want to rip my hair out when I listen to kwaito, I want to go insane, it's a soft spot for me I suppose.**

**MR: What do you think it is that you don't like about it?**

**Bronwyn: I think it irritates me mostly because I don't understand what they're singing about, so I suppose that's why, and it's so repeated over and over and over, and it looks like they're singing about the weirdest stuff. You see the music videos, and you think, what could they possibly be singing about? You check these women at home getting beaten up and raped and stuff. What's so fun about that music?**

Bronwyn felt very little identification with South Africa, and when I interviewed her, was working in order to save money to emigrate to Britain.

Anne, Colin, Jamiel and Bronwyn all provide illustrations of various ways in which kwaito music was implicated in the negotiation of being 'non-blacks' in South Africa in relation to an imagined collective of black South Africans.

For such research participants who accepted the discourse of kwaito as 'black music', but who chose to listen to the music themselves, some justification for the legitimacy of their choice was necessary. Two examples of such individuals are Anne and Shashi.

As mentioned above, Anne listened to kwaito music as part of negotiating her place as a white person in Africa. In justifying her choice to listen to kwaito music, she focused on challenging the idea that one's background can limit one's understanding of a particular kind of music. Many research participants, in their explanations of why most kwaito fans are black, mentioned the fact that most kwaito artists come from the township and sing about experiences specific to that location. Because of this, the audience is limited to those who come from a similar background, and can identify with these experiences. This formulation results in an audience for kwaito comprised of black people from the township, or of black people who are familiar with township life. Anne opposed this view by pointing out that every person has a unique set of circumstances that will influence the music they produce, and that a shared 'race' or background is no guarantee of mutually shared experiences or worldviews:

**MR: Do you ever think there's a challenge or a difficulty in relating to music made by people who are in very different circumstances from you?**

**Anne: I think every different person has different circumstances. Even your next-door neighbour, or someone you knew your whole life, if they wrote music it would**

**be influenced by the way that they've lived, the way that they see the world. So I don't think that you can generalise...I don't know, I think there'll be certain things you can identify with.**

This interpretation precluded her exclusion from kwaito on the grounds of her background as a white middle-class South African, and legitimated her choice to listen to the music.

Shashi's challenge to an exclusionary interpretation of kwaito as 'black music' was launched on different grounds. She focused on an alternative interpretation of the significance of the history of kwaito. She discussed the sense of euphoria just after the first democratic elections in 1994, when "everything got good and everybody came together". It was around this time that the genre of kwaito emerged, and Shashi interprets the mood of racial tolerance and integration at the time as influencing the possible meanings the genre:

**I think there are a lot of positive aspects from [the social climate immediately after 1994] that have come into kwaito. It's not going to stay a black preserve forever, they started it and that's great, but I don't think that means whites can't participate.**

She mentions the song "Charlie" by Wonderboom as an example of how white artists might "take kwaito and do something with it". In this way, Shashi 'leaves the door open' on white participation in kwaito music. Although she only occasionally listens to kwaito music herself, and doesn't actively utilise the genre in her self-identification in the way that Anne does, she still opposes an interpretation of kwaito that excludes her, and other whites, from its potential audience.

The above discussion has focussed on how non-black research participants engaged with the discourses of kwaito. For black kwaito listeners the issues of inclusion/exclusion and legitimacy/illegitimacy were generally less relevant, as according to the dominant construction, they belonged to the legitimate insider group of kwaito listeners by virtue of their racial classification. However, for two of the black interviewees whose life histories had inhabited the interstices of 'black' and 'white' worlds, listening to kwaito acquired a

deeper significance for their identities. Specifically, the articulation of kwaito as representing 'the township' by expressing experiences specific to that location provided a means for them to negotiate their own relationship with 'the township', as both ideological and geographical space.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Nosipho felt that the racial labelling of music is problematic. However, listening to kwaito played a part in affirming her identity as a black person. This tension in between Nosipho's identity as a black person and her identification with a multiracial South Africa was evident throughout our interview, and will be discussed and analysed in greater detail in Chapter 6. In this discussion, I wish to focus on the role played by kwaito in Nosipho's affirmation of her 'blackness'. In our interview, Nosipho and I had the following exchange:

**MR: Does that label of kwaito as 'township music' affect how you feel about the music at all?**

**Nosipho: Well, I did grow up in the township, I grew up in Umlazi, only later did I move on. So I do identify with that...I do still have a lot of connections to the township via friends and family, I do have family members who do still live in the township, even if I don't spend a lot of time there myself. It's the whole history of the music as well, so I do identify with that... [But] even if I hadn't grown up there [in the township], I would identify with kwaito in terms of the culture, with the whole identity of being black.**

By considering Nosipho's early history, it becomes clear how kwaito music became linked in a particularly personal way for her to "the whole identity of being black". As she mentions above, Nosipho spent her early years in Umlazi, surrounded by other black people, after which her family relocated to a 'white' suburb. She then described to me how at six years old, her parents enrolled her at a private school, where almost all the pupils were white, mother-tongue English speakers:

**I couldn't speak a word of English, and my parents were told that they have to speak English to me, I can't speak Zulu at home, they must speak English to me so that I can [learn to] speak English.**

Her parents duly complied with the instructions of her teachers, and so one of the only times Nosipho spoke Zulu during this time in her life was with black friends and relatives

who visited the family, most of them still living in the townships. It was primarily through these friends that she was first introduced to kwaito music. Through this experience, kwaito became a symbol of the township for Nosipho. This symbolic association was reinforced by the history of the genre as originating in the townships, and the 'culture' she sees it as representing. It is not difficult to see why the 'the township' as a geographical place and ideological construct became linked to 'being black' for Nosipho; as a black child in an unfamiliar environment surrounded almost entirely by white English-speakers, she must have experienced an acute sense of loss of 'home'[9] where she was not treated as different or as lacking in her ability to communicate with others. Listening to kwaito music allowed her to affirm her remaining connections to this place of 'home', the township, and enabled her to align herself with "the whole identity of being black".

For Tina, listening to kwaito was also implicated in negotiating a relationship with the township. She explained that kwaito is linked to black South African history, particularly the history of black urban culture. She saw this link as being forged both by the 'loxion kulca' that kwaito artists have adopted, as well as by the musical referencing of black South African popular music from the 1980s:

**Most of [the kwaito artists] make reference to the 'loxion kulca' – the location culture, that's called the 'loxion kulca' – and that by its very nature sort of links it back to the past in that way, because the culture is in some ways continuous. It's sort of a sophisticated version of mapanstula[10] ...["Waar Was Jy?" by Skeem] takes little snippets of old-South African, pre-1994 popular music, that bubblegum stuff, and all these snippets are sort of pastiched together in this one song, but it's still merged into this one continuous kwaito groove, which is distinctively post-1994. It's really cool, so I like the way it references history there.**

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[9] In using the term 'home' I am referring to a place where the individual experiences a sense of safety, security and familiarity (Steyn 2001:156-157).

[10] Pantsula is a style of dance that originated among young men in the townships of South Africa during the 80s. 'Mapantsula' refers to the culture that developed around the dance style, including a manner of dressing (a floppy hat and canvas shoes), which became associated with gangster life and a particularly homosocial identity.
Haile Stone, 2001, http://www.history.und.ac.za/Sempapers/stone2001.pdf

In this way, it is clear that an important aspect of her enjoyment of kwaito is the link it establishes with a black South African past. At one point, Tina explicitly speaks of kwaito as providing a link to the township. However, her feelings about the township are clearly ambiguous:

**Tina: [When I listen to kwaito] there is an awareness that I don't go to the townships anymore, because there's nothing that takes me there. So in that sense kwaito is my last link with the whole township vibe.**

**MR: And do you want to be linked to the whole 'township vibe'?**

**Tina: No, not necessarily, I don't like the township. It's dangerous nowadays. I mean, I sound very white middle-class now, but it is dangerous, I mean my mom gets mugged all the time.**

At a practical level, Tina feels no desire to go to the township, and considers it to be an alien and hostile environment. However, her description of kwaito as "her last link" to the township belies her dismissive response, and reveals a need to forge a connection with a place inextricably woven into the narrative of black South African history

Similarly to Nosipho, Tina attended a 'white school'[11] from an early age after her mother moved to the suburbs, and she speaks about similar feelings of alienation and loneliness:

**I think someone should have done research on how black children were feeling when they first went to Model C schools. Because it was actually quite a shock, um, I mean looking back now...sometimes you felt like there was a little bit of shame in being black when you first went there. Well, I felt that. Because you were so different. Simple things, like you couldn't swim.**

Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Tina's liminal position caused her to question how she should behave, and where she should see herself as belonging:

**It's given me a lot of issues, in the sense of like loyalty to your particular race group. I mean it goes from anything, like, does the way I speak, my so-called Model C accent, change when I'm around black people? How do I feel when I'm walking**

[11] In 1992, the government changed all previously white public schools to 'Model C' schools, which could admit black learners up to a maximum of 50 % of all learners. The imposition of school fees to cover 25% of the school's funding resulted in the schools remaining majority white, with a few blacks, coloureds and Indians whose parents could afford the fees (Roithmayr, 2002, no page numbers, http://www.erp.org.za/htm/issue1-2.htm) .

**with white people and I'm in a black area, do you know what I mean? There's always that shock of difference in those particular situations.**

Tina then described how gradually through her life she has become comfortable with both her blackness, and her suburban background. She mentioned how she's learnt to accept that

**there's nothing wrong with me liking certain things that I wouldn't have liked if I hadn't gone to the [Model C] school. There's nothing wrong with me liking Baroque music, I can like it, and I can still dance to kwaito.**

In this way, listening to kwaito is part of her affirmation of a hybrid identity. It enables her to imagine a connection to the township, thus establishing a sense of continuity in terms of black South African history and in terms of her own personal biography, while simultaneously allowing for the co-existence of aspects of her identity stemming from middle-class, suburban experiences.

Tina's case also illustrates the point that there may be varying degrees of identification with a community invoked by a genre. She emphasises that there are various aspects of the culture surrounding kwaito with which she is not familiar:

**Tina: I've never been to a live kwaito concert, simply because I'm from the Eastern Cape and we don't get many, but I wouldn't have any objection to going to one. I would have a problem with what to wear, because there's probably a certain way that you dress, you know....I [also] don't know most of the slang. There are certain insider things that I probably don't get, that would take me a long time to get.**

**MR: Do you care about that?**

**Tina: Um...that depends on the type of people you're around. If you're at a party full of bitches, and they're like, "why don't you know? Oh, you're so Model C", then obviously you're going to feel crap.**

She also expresses the opinion that the 'ideal audience' for kwaito is one situated in the township rather than the suburbs, and one that is familiar with the experiences of township life:

**I think [kwaito is] aimed mostly at people who didn't go to Model C schools...because it's so based on the 'loxion', on the township itself and what people go through there.**

She also explicitly acknowledges that she, as a black person who left the township at an early age and attended a Model C school, is not a complete insider in the 'kwaito community'. However, there are ways in which she can participate in the music, and experience a degree of belonging:

**There's always other things [other than insider references to the township] that you can understand...because there's so much in it, in the genre itself. I mean if I can't dance, then I can't understand, and I don't know what 'loxion kulca' means, and I don't know who the artists are, then maybe I'd feel left out.**

In this way, Tina's conscious acknowledgment of her status as both insider and outsider to a community of kwaito listeners stems from her awareness of her own hybrid identity. However, it is clear from Tina's comment above that other kwaito listeners may attempt to exclude and marginalise her by pointing out the areas in which her knowledge of kwaito culture is lacking. This points to how the process of marking insiders and outsiders to a genre may become implicated in marking other sorts of identity; Tina is discredited as an 'authentic' kwaito listener because she is 'so Model C'. Being 'Model C' becomes synonymous with a dilution of blackness. Tina herself made a comment in which she described black children who had attended Model C schools from a younger age than herself as 'whiter' than her. However, while a remark such as this reinforces links between kwaito, the township, and 'blackness', Tina's acknowledgement of the varying degrees to which a black person may identify with a community of kwaito listeners allows her to critique seamless constructions of a black identity in South Africa. She explained her understanding of the diverse experiences of being black in South Africa in the following comment:

**By seeing myself as black, I see myself as a particular kind of black. I don't now say that there's one type of blackness in South Africa. I mean you can see that when I said, OK fine, I dig this kwaito thing, but I'm not necessarily part of it because of certain things, because of maybe location, the way I see it as so distinctively localised from particular experiences or whatever...I just think there are as many different experiences of being black...as there are many different black people.**

She continued to explain how even attempts to generalise according to categories of 'Model C blacks' or 'township blacks' are inevitably reductive, and provided as evidence various examples of friends and relatives whose specific circumstances shaped their experiences of both environments. In this way, music may contribute to the fissuring of homogeneous categorisations of 'race' in South Africa. Such processes of marking insiders and outsiders to musical genres – and to the social communities they are constructed as representing – become all the more complex and contested in the context of South Africa, in which people seldom fit neatly in social categories, and often exist on the boundaries of multiple groups (Thornton 1996: 150 -151).

Interestingly, gender was very seldom mentioned by research participants as influencing their choice of whether or not to listen to kwaito[12]. Admittedly, the focus of my research was 'race', but many of the questions were open-ended enough to allow for interviewees to mention any social categorisation they felt was important to their preferences in music. Linda provides an exception to this tendency. She felt that although kwaito is directed at black people from the township, certain kwaito artists are directed specifically at males from the township. She discussed M'du as an example of this, contrasting him with Arthur:

**Linda: Mdu's music is a little bit more like, it's geared more towards guys. It's very, like, township, but geared more towards guys. It's got that whole *izigebengu*[13] thing going on...[and he's got] these guys that dance with him and sing along with him and whatever. So it's geared more towards males than females.**

**MR: Because of the dancers?**

**Linda: No, because of like the image of his dancers, it portrays this whole pantsula[14] kind of, *ulova* [Zulu slang for a womaniser] kind of township guy, whatever, like, hardcore...He just did that whole image, like, "I have a BMW, so props to me, all the guys respect me"...with Arthur [it's different]. You dance to it, and it's fun and everything, but the cool guys in their BMWs and their Golfs will play M'du. Because they identify with, "he made it out of the hood and he's still pantsula at heart, and we feel it, and we have a strong connection". And Arthur doesn't have**

[12] This is interesting considering the strongly masculinist and sometimes misogynistic content of kwaito lyrics (Allen 2004, Simons 1996).
[13] *Izigebengu* are criminals or gangsters.
[14] Here Linda is referring to the macho, gangster element of mapantsula culture mentioned by Tina.

**that whole township respect going on. He's just like, he's great, everyone likes Arthur, but guys aspire to be like M'du.**

Although Linda feels no identification with kwaito as a genre, she explained that she tolerates certain artists such as Zola and Senyaka (she dislikes Arthur for aesthetic reasons). But she expressed a greater dislike of artists such as M'du because of their macho image.

**Explaining Mandoza**

"Nkalakatha" by Mandoza was the first kwaito track that received significant popularity with white South African audiences. I can attest to that from my own experience as a middle-class white South African. In my first year at university in 2000, I was aware of the existence of a genre called 'kwaito', but I couldn't name a single kwaito artist or kwaito track. Then, "Nkalakatha" was released, and it was played constantly at 'white' music venues in Grahamstown, and on 'white' radio stations. It seemed to me at the time that everyone, regardless of 'race', loved that song, and from speaking to the research participants, it emerged that many of them had the same impression. The challenge for those participants who accepted the dominant articulation of kwaito as 'black music' was to explain how a track located within a supposedly 'black' genre achieved cross-racial popularity. Interviewees' explanations of the phenomenon of Mandoza provided fascinating insight into their perceptions of 'race' and music, and specifically, their ideas about the factors determining the 'race' of a genre. Three separate approaches to explaining Mandoza may be discerned from their responses, but some interviewees incorporated aspects of more than one approach in their responses.

The first explanation of Mandoza's crossover success focused on his white producer as the mediator through which the 'black' sounds of kwaito were rendered appealing to a white audience. Zama's explanation of Mandoza's white fan base is a case in point:

**Zama: Just a few white people listen to Mandoza, but most of the other kwaito musicians are listened to by blacks.**

**MR: Why do you think Mandoza appeals to whites?**

**Zama: I actually thought about that, we were even discussing it with a group of people. Maybe it's because he had a white producer who worked with him, because it was totally different from the other kwaito artists, he brought in a new sound from his previous stuff.**

In this interpretation, Mandoza's 'crossover kwaito' is qualitatively different both from his previous work, and from that of other kwaito artists. In this way, the latter is untainted by the former, and remains 'black'. This difference is attributed to the white producer whom he had working with him on the more recent 'crossover' material. A similar sentiment was expressed by Khaya:

**MR: Why do you think Mandoza became a crossover hit?**

**K: [His] white producer. And the beats, his producer definitely knows what beats work well for crossover sounds. And "Nkalakatha" definitely made it, and from then on he was like this crossover, 'crossed-border' kwaito artist.**

Other participants agreed that Mandoza's white producer has contributed to his crossover success, but attributed a certain amount of credit to Mandoza:

**[Lenny has just contrasted Mandoza to Mzekezeke, asserting that the latter does not aim for the white market.]**

**MR: How is Mandoza different from [Mzekezeke], how is he aiming for the white market?**

**Lenny: I would say that, the way he...he doesn't mix his own instruments, somebody else does, and that is [his producer] Le Roux...But [Mandoza] tells them what kind of sound he's looking for. And then Le Roux will mix for him and he'll come in with the vocals.**

In Lenny's view, a degree of artistic agency is attributed to Mandoza, but the individual who actually produces the sounds that appeal to the 'white market' is the white producer. It is easy to see parallels between these interpretations and the views of the maskanda musicians studied by Meintjes (2003). In her research, Meintjes analysed discourses shaping the comments of maskanda musicians and producers, which labelled the white producer as "expert, sophisticate, technician, electronic wizard" (Meintjies 2003: 113), in contrast to the black musician, who was constructed as creating music naturally and intuitively, without the artificial assistance of technology. It would seem obvious that a

similar dichotomy was at work in the statements made by the research participants; the 'blackness' of kwaito is located at the level of Mandoza's vocal performance, after which the crossover appeal of the final product is manufactured by the white producer, who uses technology to 'whiten' the sound. This analysis is suitable for explaining the comments of certain research participants; it makes sense that if the 'blackness' of kwaito is important to a listener's own racial self-identification, he or she would defend that blackness against any perceived dilution, such as Mandoza's 'crossover kwaito'. However, such an analysis seems unsatisfactory when applied to an individual such as Khaya. The 'blackness' of kwaito was irrelevent to Khaya's self-perception; he is a rock fan and expressed a dislike of kwaito for various aesthetic reasons. Throughout our interview he opposed any view that posits a racialised division of music tastes as natural or inevitable. The following comment clearly illustrates that he views racialised labels of music as social constructions rather than as reflecting anything intrinsic in the music itself, or in the 'race' of the artist or listener:

**[He is speaking about when he used to perform in a rock band.]**

**It's just weird to be inside something and know that lots of people from a certain race are just excluded because it's not their sound. It's all just music, it's all just notes at the end of the day, but because of...what we see and what people say, it's become stereotyped to be 'white music' or 'black music'.**

So how does one explain his evident belief that a black artist needs a white producer to formulate a sound that whites will buy? This seems to assume that members of a racial group have some secret insider knowledge of the tastes and preferences of others in their group; that only a white can make music that other whites will identify with, and that if you are a black, the music you make will inevitably be liked only by other blacks. This just isn't congruent with his own love of rock as a black person, or with his emphasis on the constructedness of racialised music. I think the answer lies in Khaya's beliefs about the role of background and environment in forming the musical tastes of an individual. It is not an essentialised view of 'race' that underlies Khaya's interpretation, but rather a deterministic understanding of the relationship between one's personal background and one's listening preferences. Khaya expressed the opinion that as one gets older, one's tastes become increasingly static and less open to change. As he puts it, "the older we

grow, the less likely we are to accept [music] foreign to us". In this view, one's musical tastes are formed early on in life according to one's experiences and environment, and then remain relatively static throughout adulthood. Khaya expresses the opinion that at present in South Africa, the environment in which one is raised is still very different depending on one's 'race'. Thus, Mandoza and his white producer, having grown up in different backgrounds, will inevitably have different musical tastes and insights. Thus, if Mandoza wishes to reach listeners with tastes shaped by a different racialised background, he needs an insider, someone who has experienced the same 'white' background and formative environment. In this view, 'race' influences social environment and background, rather than directly dictating musical taste. There was a contrast present among those interviewed between individuals who saw taste as being determined by background, and those who saw background as playing a role in musical preference, but as being subordinate to individual choice. I will discuss this issue in greater depth in Chapter 7.

The second explanation given for Mandoza's crossover success was that his kwaito mixes elements that 'represent' both blacks and whites. This explanation was articulated by David D:

**I think maybe [Mandoza] blended a bit of rock and kwaito. What he did with his producer was very unique at that stage, taking a chance. He had rock elements, that white people who like rock identified with, and also the kwaito elements, and he blended them together. So in the end it worked for him wonderfully.**

The following exchange between George, Lenny and Tina also interprets Mandoza's kwaito as mixing various elements that each appeal to a different racial or social group:

**George: Do you know what made ["Nkalakatha"] cross over? That riff is the central rhythmic thing of the whole song, and that's what a lot of white people listen to in rock anthems. Think of "We will rock you", or "Another one bites the dust" [by Queen], that almost singable rhythm.**

**Tina: But the video's not even particularly 'rockish'...**

**Lenny: It had to be like that so he can also sell in the townships.**

Such interpretations do little to break down constructions fixing the relationship between musical sounds and racial group. Mandoza's music is mixed so that there is 'something for everyone', but which 'something' appeals to each racial group is clearly identifiable, and may be identified as distinct from other elements in the mix, continuing to exist as a potential marker of difference. As Wade comments in his discussion of Colombian Costeño music, "for the idea of mixture to have any meaning it must invoke the idea of difference...[e]very mention of mixture, of hybrid, or of creole inevitably reaffirms the difference which is apparently being dissolved in the speech act" (Wade 2000: 15).

The third explanation takes agency out of the hands of Mandoza, his producer, and the particular sounds of the music, and places it in the hands of the music industry. In this view, the distribution and marketing of Mandoza's "Nkalakatha" was different from that of other kwaito artists, and resulted in the popularity he enjoyed among white South Africans. This interpretation is clear in the following dialogue between George and Tina:

**George: Sometimes I don't even think it's about ["Nkalakatha"], I think it's about the distribution networks.**

**Tina: That's exactly what I think as well.**

**George: It's about who has the most money to pay the DJ to play the song, and to pay for the distribution. You know, who controls which artists become famous, etc. It's the guys who are promoting it at the CD stores, the guys who keep pushing the album.**

Amanda expressed a similar view:

**MR: Why do you think Mandoza became such a crossover hit?**

**Amanda: ...Maybe it was marketing. Maybe somebody stumbled across it and said, the country's ready for it, and had a great marketing plan, and it was promoted well, and that's really it, whereas others didn't have the opportunity. That's the only thing I can really think of.**

In this view, the 'blackness' of kwaito does not reside in the 'race' of the artist, or the sounds of the music, but rather in the constructions of the industry, which may manipulate the listening and buying choices of audiences. Amanda attributes a limited agency to the buyers themselves in suggesting that South Africa was "ready for"

Mandoza and "Nkalakatha" and that's why the marketing and promotion plan worked, but it is still clear that in this interpretation, the power to capitalise on this shift in social climate and ultimately to control racialised buying patterns remains firmly in the hands of the industry.

Underlying the explanations of some research participants was an undercurrent of moral judgement centring around the question: Did Mandoza 'sell out' his black roots by attempting to cross over to a white audience, or is he contributing to the project of non-racial nation-building? The clearest illustration of the tensions around this question is a debate between Lenny, Tina and George. I quote this debate at length, because to me, this provides a fascinating insight into some of the competing discourses surrounding crossover in contemporary South Africa:

**Lenny: What I don't like about these crossover things, it's like people are not being...real to themselves. I mean Mandoza, really, Mandoza grew up in a township, he stole cars, he probably pointed guns at many people. He went to jail. He only started singing at the age of 21. He has never been to a multi-racial school. So I don't know, to me...I know you don't have to have been in a multi-racial school to talk about [the] rainbow nation and stuff like that. But to me, I don't know where Mandoza gets it from. That's the only reservation I have about it. ...**

**Tina: But then you can't place where Mandoza is now...he's moved from the township to...**

**Lenny: Mandoza is trying very much to be 'rainbow', you know what I'm saying?**

**Tina: So is that a bad thing?**

**Lenny: No, it's working, it's working for him.**

**Tina: But is it working for him, or is it working for something else?**

**Lenny: It's working for him and those who believe in the rainbow concept.**

**Tina: But why is he being criticised? Surely if we are all aiming for this post-apartheid South African ideal, surely then it is a good thing for kwaito to cross over to other people? It's a double-edged sword then, surely? You've got to cross over to get the South African ideal, but [some people] equate crossing over to being unreal.**

**George: Because people will always want to own something.**

**Tina: But then it's being owned nationally, surely? Then what's the problem? Why is it when whites like it, suddenly it's not black anymore? Suddenly it's not kwaito anymore.**

**George: There's a feeling that it's been appropriated, it's been stolen. It's not like, we're all sharing, it's like, they're taking it from us.**

In this conversation, there is Lenny on the one hand, who has doubts about whether someone like Mandoza, who grew up in a black township environment, can make music that appeals to whites while still being 'real' to himself. On the other hand, there is Tina who highlights the contradiction in advocating a non-racial unified South Africa, but accusing black musicians who make music that whites like of giving in to commercial pressure and being 'unreal'. Finally, there is George, who points out that "people will always want to own" music, and that at this point in South African history, the group ownership of music is contested along racial rather than national lines.

Lenny's comments in this discussion resonate with some of Khaya's opinions discussed earlier. Clearly, Lenny sees Mandoza's township background as limiting the type of music through which he may legitimately and authentically express himself. Once again, this reveals a static understanding of musical taste based on racialised background, rather than on 'race' per se – this is implied by his comment that if Mandoza had gone to a multi-racial school, his commitment to the 'rainbow nation', and thus his crossover kwaito, would be more understandable. George's insights echo some of the academic analyses made of white participation in 'black genres' such as rap. For example, Tricia Rose argues that "some rappers have equated white participation with a process of dilution and subsequent theft of black culture" (quoted in Wong, 2000: 79. Also cf. Lipsitz 1994, Monson 1995, Guilbault 2000). Tina shows an appreciation for the fluidity of cultural identity and musical taste in her comment that Mandoza no longer lives in the township. The implication is that he may have had subsequent experiences that have impacted on and altered his self-perception, and the musical form in which he feels he may legitimately express himself.

In conclusion, the case of Mandoza's 'crossover kwaito' makes clear differing perceptions of where the 'blackness' of kwaito lies. Those who chose the first explanation felt that the 'blackness' of kwaito lies in the 'race' (or the racialised experiences) of the artist, and thus Mandoza's 'whitened' kwaito is a result of the 'race' of his producer. Those who chose the second explanation located the 'blackness' of kwaito (and the 'whiteness' of rock) at the level of specific musical sounds or visual images (in the case of Mandoza's 'township' music video), which become codified as representing a particular racial or social group. Those who chose the third explanation saw the 'blackness' of kwaito as a marketing tool, constructed by the racially marked distribution channels (which radio stations play it, or in which sections it is placed in music retail outlets). Finally, explaining Mandoza provided a forum in which underlying debates about national unity and racial difference could be played out.

# Chapter 4:
# Examining the Discourses of South African Jazz

## Listening to the discourses of South African jazz

Up until this point, I have said very little about the discourses linking South African jazz to social and racial groups. This is because research participants seldom mentioned jazz in their discussion of the dominant articulations of 'race' and music in South Africa. It was only in responses to specific questions regarding jazz that I was able to discern the boundaries of social difference invoked by listening to South African jazz. The two primary classifications of the 'ideal audience' of South African jazz focused on age and musical training, as I will show below. However, underlying the general tendency among research participants to dismiss 'race' as a irrelevant to defining the audience of South African jazz, a tension could be detected: on the one hand, the discourse of South African jazz as racially inclusive, and on the other, the implication of the music in marking racial and/or ethnic identity boundaries. These discourses were revealed in discussions of the taped examples of South African jazz.

The majority of the research participants felt that the 'older generation' would listen to the South African jazz tracks on the tape. For example, Janice felt that "Mannenberg" by Abdullah Ibrahim, the first example of South African jazz on the tape, would appeal to older people from across the racial spectrum because the track has no vocals. For her, it is the voice that marks music in terms of 'race'. Linda and Nosipho expressed similar judgments regarding the listenership of "Lagunya Khayelitsha" by Winston Mankunku, the second example of South African jazz on the tape, saying that people of their parents' generation would enjoy this sort of music. However, five individuals added a racial categorisation by commenting that an older black audience would enjoy the South African jazz tracks. In some cases, personal experiences were cited as reasons for this racial association. For example, Tina responded that she associates "Mannenberg", and other South African jazz tunes from a similar era, with "township black people" because

she used to play this type of music at venues in the township, such as Mdantsane Sun, where the audience was majority black. She also explained that her personal biography as a black South African has influenced her attitude to aspects of certain types of South African jazz:

**I'm sort of tired of the typical South African jazz signifiers, like the elongated minor third that goes on, I'm tired of hearing it, whereas someone else might not be... For me it's become clichéd, because I'm a black South African so I've heard if for longer, and I'm tired of it.**

She further explained that she now chooses to listen to South African jazz that sounds different from the "typical" style she used to play and is tired of hearing. In this way, her racialised experiences as a black South African have informed her listening choices. It is clear that although South African jazz may be labelled as 'racially inclusive', racial identity may inform listening choices, and perceived differences may be highlighted by these choices. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Although the majority of research participants expressed the opinion that young South Africans have rejected South African jazz as 'old people's music', a significant number felt that members of the black youth who consider themselves to be the 'New South Africans' have appropriated South African jazz (and other South African music with jazz influences) as a symbol of this new identity. I will discuss this issue in more depth later on in the chapter. However, it is necessary to mention it at this point in order to explain the comments made by certain interviewees contesting the labelling of jazz as exclusively 'old people's music'. For example, Tina felt that some young people may enjoy "Mannenberg". She supported this opinion by pointing out that the group Mafikizolo is very popular with young people, and that some of their music reminds her of "Mannenberg" and other South African jazz from a similar time period. Zama agreed that certain South African jazz tunes may appeal to younger people. She made the following comment in relation to "Lagunya Khayelitsha" by Winston Mankunku:

**It's got groove, and it's not too laid back...It's a bit behind and old fashioned, but I think it would be welcomed [by young people] just because of the beat... I'm listening to this song and thinking, Mafikizolo would do something like this.**

However, she disagreed with Tina's assessment that young people may enjoy "Mannenberg", pointing out the absence of a beat one could dance to.

**["Mannenberg"] is more like, sit around and have a beer and chat. But ["Lagunya Khayelitsha"] you could play at a party.**

Whether or not a track had a beat was mentioned frequently as a determining factor in whether or not young people would listen to it. For example, Devasha felt that the jazz tracks on the tape would appeal mainly to an older, multi-racial audience. Her reason for this was the absence of lyrics – she felt that older people prefer instrumental music as it is more "relaxing". However, Devasha felt that the beat of "Spirits of Tembisa" by Moses Molelekwa, the third South African jazz track on the tape, would appeal to younger people. The absence of the appropriate beat resulted in Nosipho dismissing "Lagunya Khayelitsha" by Mankunku as "boring" and as appealing to older people – she commented that South African jazz in general doesn't have the "drums and bass" of contemporary popular music, which she enjoys.

One track that seemed to defy classification in terms of an 'ideal audience' defined according to a particular social group was "Spirits of Tembisa". George felt that because Molelekwa had done crossover collaborations with bands such as TKZee[15], people who didn't generally listen to jazz would listen to his music. Zama agreed with this, saying that she used to listen to Molelekwa before she developed an enjoyment of South African jazz as a genre. Ntatho expressed the opinion that the music did not mark itself racially:

**I think this song is very appealing to everyone...very diverse. It's not, ooh, I'm African, or, ooh, I'm white.**

Lenny agreed that a wide range of people would like this music. However, he did not think people from the township would enjoy it, as the music is "too deep", and his perception was that people in the township prefer more "traditional" South African jazz.

[15] Molelekwa produced the track "Fela Kae" and wrote "It's My Party" for the album *Guz 2001* (2000).

The discourse of jazz as music listened to primarily by those with some musical training, or by other jazz musicians, was mainly discernable in comments regarding "Raindance" by Marcus Wyatt, the fourth example of South African jazz on the tape. George felt that the track would mainly appeal to jazz musicians, or people who had been "following jazz" for a long time. Tina agreed that the 'ideal audience' for this sort of jazz would be people who had studied music or who had spent time developing an appreciation for jazz. Zama felt that "serious jazz fans" who follow the live jazz scene, as well as fellow jazz musicians, would enjoy this track. Nosipho commented that people who focus on "the music itself" rather than on the way music makes one feel would listen to this sort of jazz, implying a similar interpretation of this music as requiring a certain amount of mental engagement, and the music knowledge that such engagement presupposes.

It is clear from the above discussion that the discursive linking of South African jazz to social categories is often ambiguous. Certain discourses seem to apply more to certain types of South African jazz than to others. For example, the discourse of South African jazz as 'musician's music' was evident only in discussions of the Marcus Wyatt track. Competing discourses were also present around issues such as whether or not South African jazz is 'old people's music' or 'the music of New South Africans'. Similarly to kwaito, when research participants referred to the discourses of South African jazz at an abstract level in the absence of musical sounds, such ambiguities were often ignored, and classifications of South African jazz listeners were spoken about as if they were relatively stable. It could be argued that the contrast between this relatively simple discursive linking of music at the abstract level of genre, and the far more complex and contested nature of the discourses at the level of musical sounds, and of specific musical experiences, is particularly marked in the case of jazz, as so many types of music were discussed by interviewees as being classifiable under the general label of 'jazz'.

Evident in both discussions of the taped examples and in the interviews in which no music was played was a tension between ideas regarding jazz as racially inclusive on the one hand, and as implicated in marking racial boundaries on the other. It is to this issue that this discussion now turns.

**Engaging with the discourses: jazz as 'music for everyone'**

The discourse of South African jazz as a racially inclusive genre is a particularly unstable articulation. It is difficult to determine whether or not it is accurate to call 'racial inclusiveness' a dominant discourse of South African jazz. It is the case that when I asked research participants whom they think would listen to and enjoy South African jazz, classifications of 'race' were generally not mentioned. It is also true that when I asked interviewees directly if they thought jazz listeners could be classified according to any racial group in South Africa, responses were usually in the negative, and often made overt reference to the racially inclusive nature of South African jazz. For example, Shashi made the following comment:

**I find jazz to be one of the more 'integrated' genres of music, in contrast to, say, 'boy bands', [who would appeal] mainly to whites, or kwaito, [which would appeal] mainly to blacks. Jazz lovers seem to be attracted by a certain 'borderline' quality of company and music.**

Similarly, Zama described jazz concerts as spaces where racial integration among South Africans is evident:

**You go to Awesome Africa...it's in Durban every September, it's jazz and stuff. And the audience, you find...it's not like, oh, because it's afrojazz, it's got to be [an audience of a certain race]...it's mixed up, you know,**

When I asked Ntatho who listens to South African jazz, she responded,

**Ahhh, jazz is for all the people, you know what they say.**

She immediately qualified this comment by pointing out that many young people now see jazz rather as music for all the older people:

**I promise you, I was sitting in on these people's conversation, and they were going on and on about how jazz is for oldies, and how it makes them fall asleep.**

Once again, the picture painted is one in which social divisions such as age are more important criteria for enjoying jazz than racial categories.

However, many participants described experiences in which, rather than dissolving racial boundaries, jazz served to highlight differences. For example, Shashi mentioned that although jazz music can be seen to allow for racial integration at performances, the different demographics of specific performance venues may be seen as drawing attention to differences in socio-economic status between racial groups.

**Grahamstown Fest where I watched the most live jazz performances this year had a very mixed audience in terms of race, gender and age... but none of the venues differed much in terms of class – it was all middle- to upper-class people, since Festival is a bit pricey overall. Then you look at something like 'Jazz on the Lake', and because there are no tickets the crowd is lower- to middle-class, and largely black.**

In venues charging high ticket prices, racial composition is more balanced. However, at free performances, no ticket price exists to keep out the poor black masses, and so the audience is "lower- to middle-class, and largely black". Ironically, it is the very label of 'racially inclusive music' that highlights the source of division between the audience at the Grahamstown festival and those at 'Jazz on the Lake' as being class based: as it is not the music keeping people out, it is clearly the ticket prices. The fact that divisions between those who can and cannot afford the tickets coincide with divisions of 'race' highlights the continued racialisation of class in South Africa.

The above example does not challenge the discourse constructing the musical sounds of South African jazz as racially unmarked and neutral. However, a number of research participants described experiences in which the music itself was implicated in highlighting racial difference. For example, Shashi pointed out that racial divisions were evident in the composition of audiences for specific kinds of jazz at the Grahamstown Festival. In her words, there was "a 'whiter' crowd for the big bands and a 'blacker' crowd for Zim Ngqawana". Themba made a similar observation:

**If you come to the jazz centre, if you see it's going to be Zim Ngqawana, it's going to be full of maybe, 80% black people. And then when it's a Dixieland band, the jazz centre's going to be full of white people.**

For other research participants, listening to certain South African jazz artists allowed them to affirm their own racial or ethnic identity. For example, David D explained that:

**You get guys like Zim Ngqawana, he's more on the Xhosa side, so he's got those Xhosa, ethnic roots in it. Because he wants to play South African jazz, but at the same time he puts in tribal bits, which *we* can identify. As we all know, the western age is taking over, so some traditions are being left aside. Winston [Mankunku] and Zim have those blending of traditional songs...and traditional instruments. I like the mixture, because it gives me a background as to where *we* come from. [emphasis added]**

In this interpretation, jazz may invoke varying degrees of community. Listening to Ngqawana's music to affirm a Xhosa identity does not mean that people who are not Xhosa are necessarily excluded from the music. As David mentions, Ngqawana wants to play 'South African jazz'. However, the music includes "ethnic roots" and "tribal bits, which we can identify". It seems that this 'we' is a particularly Xhosa 'we', being affirmed by listening to Ngqawana's and Mankunku's music.

In the above comments, we have a single South African jazz artist, Zim Ngqawana, claimed by various individuals as marking different sorts of identity: a black identity for Themba and Shashi, and a Xhosa identity for David. It is clear from these opposing interpretations, as well as the discussion above, that a tension exists between jazz as 'music for everyone', and the potential for jazz to mark differences of 'race', class and ethnic identity.

## Engaging with the discourses of South African jazz

For research participants who classified themselves as South African jazz fans, but who also accepted the discourse of jazz as music enjoyed by older people, some explanation for their listening choice was necessary. These explanations generally focused either on individual personality and identity, claiming that regardless of age or circumstances, some people are born jazz fans; or on individual background and biography, explaining that although most young people don't like jazz, experiences specific to their own life have shaped their enjoyment of the music.

Shashi incorporates both of these approaches in her explanation of why she listens to jazz in general, and South African jazz in particular. Her father played trombone for the African Jazz Pioneers, so Shashi was surrounded by jazz growing up. I asked her if she feels that this aspect of her background has influenced her current love of jazz and she answered that:

**I have grown up with it, but it's not just that, because I have a really specific affinity with that music, any time I hear it, it makes me happy... I really think you either like [jazz] or you don't. And it's got to do something to your soul, you have to identify with it, otherwise you just won't get it.**

Vumani focused more on his individual background and life experiences when explaining his enjoyment of South African jazz music. The kindling of his interest in jazz was related to his passion for radio, and his aspirations to work as a radio DJ. His radio 'idol' was DJ Kansas on Khosi FM. It was when Kansas began playing jazz on his show that Vumani first developed an interest in the music. He explained how he came to regard jazz music as a 'deeper' option to the popular music one generally hears on the radio:

**...jazz in general is very deep, so its up to the individual to choose whether they want to get very much deep, or whether you just want to play what you hear on the radio.**

He further described how he subsequently started listening to jazz played on Shado Twala's show on Radio Metro on a Sunday afternoon, and how this music satisfied a personal need. He explained that prior to hearing the show, he had felt that musically "there was this vacuum on Sundays, I needed something that would talk to me". When he started listening to the show he felt that whoever was playing the music "must have had someone like myself in mind".

In this way, Vumani's interpretation of his enjoyment of jazz centres around a personal identification with the music, as well as past experiences specific to his own individual aspirations and choices. His enjoyment of South African jazz may also be understood as developing concomitantly with his awareness of himself as a post-apartheid South African. His interest in South African jazz began shortly after 1994, when being 'proudly South African' became something that was heard frequently in nationalist rhetoric.

Around this time he heard the music of Themba Mkhize and came to the conclusion that the quality was of the same level as many of the international artists he enjoyed:

**As things changed, and you had to be proudly South African, I thought, OK, I think I'm too much into this American jazz, the Fourplay and that...[then I heard Mkhize's music] and if you're not paying attention you could swear he is [inaudible] and Fourplay together. And then I learnt it was Themba Mkhize, and I paid more attention, and found out about Sipho Gumede, Jimmy Dludlu.**

Taking an active interest in South African jazz artists became implicated in Vumani's identification with a nascent national South Africa identity.

Similarities may be found between aspects of Vumani's story and Zee's explanation of how he came to listen to South African jazz. For Zee, listening to jazz was the result of his efforts to find an alternative to the limited range of music played by his parents at home. As his family was devoutly Christian, the majority of music Zee was exposed to while growing up was religious music, as well as the occasional program on Radio Zulu. He explained how he felt stifled by this restricted musical diet, and bought his own radio so that he could listen to a variety of different stations in order to broaden his musical horizons. He heard jazz music on Metro FM, and developed an active interest in the genre. As he grew older, he started attending live jazz concerts, which he described as being his favourite context in which to listen to the music. I asked him why this was and he responded that:

**...you can see the passion in their eyes, that they love whatever they sing, and it's got a lot of meaning to it. What they sing, it comes from somewhere deeper, and it's up to you to interpret it the way you want to.**

Zee felt that a love for any sort of music, including jazz, could be explained by a personal, rather than a group, identity:

**I don't think the music you like is still about colour...People are coming out more as individuals than anything else. We're not coming out as groups, as tribes, as genders, or whatever, it's just you and your world.**

This emphasis on individual interpretation as important to musical meaning, and on individual choice as the determining factor in taste in music, resonates with the responses

of the other jazz fans who focused on individual criteria when explaining their love of jazz.

A slightly different approach to explaining a love of South African jazz is illustrated by Linda's comments. For her, listening to a genre of music rejected by most of her peers supports her perceptions of her own identity as a 'free thinker', and as someone who bases her taste on more 'valid' criteria than the musical preferences of the majority. Her criteria for evaluating music focused on an aesthetic valuing individual effort and creativity. I will discuss this issue in more detail in the section below devoted to examining aesthetic evaluations of kwaito, rock and jazz.

**South African jazz and imagining history**

An alternative way of engaging with the discourse of South African jazz as 'music for the older generation' was one that appropriated this articulation as a means for establishing connections with the South African past. A comment made by Zee provides an illustration of this approach. He first explained how current South African jazz and "jazzy styles" played by artists such as MXO and Thandiswa Mazwai are involved in a dialogue with South African jazz from the past:

**I think [this music] has been inspired by the older jazz which our fathers used to play, and now they don't play. Because now the generation is more kwaito orientated, [but these artists] have taken music from way back...and made it modern and current.**

He then commented that more young South Africans are starting to listen to these "jazzy styles". I asked him:

**MR: Why do you think a younger audience is starting to get more interested in jazz again?**

**Zee: Probably because they've been told about the history, because you know like during the struggle...after the whole toyi-toying thing and whatever, there was like a part of the struggle where they had music, and people used to go and enjoy it. I think that's how young people are interpreting it, because young people these days are only about, party, party, and enjoyment and entertainment. I think that's why**

**[jazz] is appealing more, because now I think [young people] identify with how people used to enjoy themselves in the old days.**

In this way, Zee engages with a particular reading of the role of jazz music in the struggle against apartheid that focuses on jazz as a music of enjoyment rather than of resistance against white domination. By constructing the meaning of jazz in this way, he neutralises the potential for jazz music to serve as a reminder of past racial conflict and white atrocities, and he is able to imagine a non-racial category of "young people" rediscovering the music of their collective past.

Tina agreed that listening to South African jazz could provide a means for engaging with South African history. However, she expressed reservations about the usefulness of the type of engagement facilitated by what she considered to be the dominant definition of 'South African jazz'. She commented that this definition reduces the genre to jazz produced by exiled black musicians during Apartheid. She felt that this ignores a lot of the jazz produced by other South Africans, and has the potential to exclude segments of the South African population from the community invoked by the music, including white musicians and listeners:

**MR: What would be the problem with [a restrictive definition of South African jazz]?**

**Tina: If...black equals exile equals politics equals jazz is going to be the equation, then that's not cool, you know what I mean, so that would be my objection to it... That [sort of] jazz...that was mainly played by the exiles, um, by its politics it's orientated mostly to the black South African vibe. Whereas there are white jazz musicians around who might not necessarily [play] the same type of thing that makes up what is known as the 'exile South African jazz sound'. [The exile jazz musicians] did do a lot, ya, but they're not the be all and end all of South African jazz.**

In this way, engaging with the past through this exclusive interpretation of South African jazz has the danger of constructing a history involving homogeneous racial actors; a 'black' struggle against a 'white' oppressor. This is an overly simplistic portrayal of a complex situation in which, as Tina puts it, "not every white person was beating up blacks in Vorster square, and not every black person was out in the street toyi-toying".

She felt that invoking such a view of history may have negative implications for attempts to build a non-racial post-apartheid South Africa. For this reason, she explained that she values jazz that engages with the past in more complex, personal ways, and feels that a number of contemporary South African jazz artists are moving in this direction. She mentioned music by Moses Molelekwa and Zim Ngqawana as two such examples:

**OK, if you look at Moses Molelekwa's *Genes and Spirits*, if you look at...the title, what it implies, it's that we're going back, but it's not like a political going back in a way, it's a more spiritual way of going back. So I think there are different ways of relating to the past now, other than the political. So that's how it changed, so it's a politics with a small 'p' now, which is nicer in a way...If you take someone like Zim Ngqawana, and you listen to how he references [the past], he no longer specifically references the struggle type of trace, but there's a very strong Xhosa trace in his music. Like...the circumcision song "Qula Kwedini", it's sung when the child has just finished his circumcision and he's going home... ...and [Ngqawana] makes sure that type of cultural trace is acknowledged. It just shows that the historical vibe is still there, but it's no longer looked at with bitterness or as something to be overcome, the relationship with [history] is now more complex.**

This issue of the consequences of a restrictive definition of 'South African jazz' was also discussed by Ntatho, Lenny and George (together with Tina), all of whom are jazz musicians or ex-jazz musicians themselves. These four felt that there is a growing popularity of this sort of jazz among young black South Africans who consider themselves to be 'the new South Africans'. In his interview, Vumani mentioned a similar perception. He specifically described young black women who wear prominent jewellery and big 'funky' hairstyles, and who listen to South African jazz by artists such as Jimmy Dludlu, as well as other music by black musicians, such as Erykah Badu. Tina, Ntatho, Lenny and George were all very disparaging of these 'new South Africans' and their appropriation of this exclusively defined category of 'South African jazz':

**Lenny: [Listening to South African jazz in order to portray a 'new South African' image] is being hypocritical, it has all this pretence. Even if they know nothing about music, they just pretend they love South African jazz, because cool people listen to it.**

**George: I see it from your point of view, particularly working at a CD shop. Because when I was working at Mega Vox, the guys who come in and order South African jazz CDs are like wearing the frigging berets and the jacket, and they look like they're about to go to a jazz club, and they don't know shit.**

**Lenny: And they don't like you to serve them wearing takkies [canvas lace-up shoes] or jeans. Coming to serve them when they're in the jazz section, they really take offence to that.**

Tina, Ntatho, Lenny and George all felt that the growing popularity of this 'new South African' image places pressure on jazz musicians in South Africa to produce music derivative of the sounds produced by exiled black jazz artists during apartheid. The catalyst for this discussion was "Lagunya Khayelitsha" by Winston Mankunku, one of the taped jazz examples. All four of the interviewees were amazed that the track was by Mankunku. They felt that Mankunku is usually very experimental and adventurous in his sound, whereas, according to George, this track sounds like

**someone having a go at writing South African 'townshippy' pentatonic, pop jazz. It really doesn't sound like Winston Mankunku.**

They all expressed the opinion that the privileging of this sound as 'South African jazz' leads to a stifling of the development of new jazz styles less self-consciously 'South African'.

These varying interpretations of South African jazz as 'music for the older generation' make it clear that the linking of jazz to older South Africans and thus to the South African past provides a means for imagining competing versions of South African history, as well as negotiating contemporary notions of national belonging. For research participants who aspired to a career as South African jazz musicians, the privileging of a certain jazz sound as 'South African' took on a personal significance in that such interpretations may have ramifications for their artistic freedom as musicians. It became clear that the identity of some research participants as prospective jazz musicians in South Africa impacted significantly on other aspects of their approach to listening to jazz.

**South African jazz as 'musicians' music'**

About half of the South African jazz fans that I interviewed were jazz students. For the majority of these research participants, it was clear that their identity as musicians played a determining role in their identity as jazz listeners. For most of these individuals,

imagining their identity as musicians seemed to operate in a separate sphere from imagining their racial or national identity. However, in a few cases, an individual's identity as a musician was clearly shaped by her or his identity as a racialised or nationalised subject. A primary identity as a musician informed listening practices in three main ways: in some cases, listening choices were motivated by a desire to improve technically or musically as a jazz musician; in other cases, listening to South African jazz was implicated in the process of imagining an individual identity as a jazz musician; and for others, listening to jazz was about affirming an identity as a musician in contrast to non-musicians. In some cases, the jazz discussed included international as well as South African artists. In others, reasons for listening choices related specifically to South African jazz, or to particular styles of South African jazz. I will attempt to make these distinctions clear regarding the jazz under discussion throughout this section.

Many of these research participants made their jazz listening choices according to what they felt they could learn from the music, and apply to their own playing. Many participants explained that they choose to listen to jazz played by artists proficient on the instrument that they themselves are studying. This motivation to learn by listening to other jazz artists also influenced the contexts in which the music was listened to: either alone, so that attention could be focused on the music and the technique of the musicians, or with fellow jazz students, so that each could learn from the other's musical insights. For example, Zama, who is studying jazz vocals, made the following comments:

**If I'm on my own...I listen to the voice. I wonder how she did that, and get little new ideas...When I'm with my [fellow jazz student] friend I get to listen to it differently, because she's like, "did you hear that?", and I'm like, "what?", and she says, "you should listen to it next time".**

Zama also explained that this way of listening to jazz is not conducive to relaxing or socialising, and that she would choose a different sort of music for a party:

**I had one experience, we had a party, it was a farewell party for those students from Sweden, and there was a whole lot of us jazz students, and [someone started] playing jazz [CDs]. The party just changed, it was not a party anymore, everyone was looking at the CDs, and asking, "who's this?", and the party atmosphere was**

**like ruined. So if you listen to something like kwaito, where nobody really cares, then you dance and talk to each other, and you're having a good time.**

Besides being used as a source for learning about technical and musical aspects of jazz, choosing which jazz artists to listen to could affirm the individual's image of themselves as an aspiring jazz musician. This motivation was demonstrated most clearly by Themba's comments about his reasons for choosing to listen to certain South African jazz musicians and not others. He expressed the opinion that in South Africa, a lot of music markets itself as 'jazz' to be commercially successful, but that often the music has been mixed with other types of music (he mentioned kwaito as an example), and so can no longer be accurately termed 'jazz'. He explained that he is very discerning in choosing only to listen to South African jazz artists who play what he described as 'true jazz' – jazz that is not mixed with other genres – and who he believes are not motivated primarily by a desire to make money. He mentioned specifically the artists Feya Faku, Andile Yenana, Zim Ngqawana, and Winston Mankunku, and explained that

**I like the fact that they...they are true to their music, you know, like they are true to themselves, they don't really play jazz to get money, their focus is not money, you know, it's to bring out something out of themselves.**

**MR: How do you know what their focus is?**

**Themba: The music tells me when I'm listening, someone who's doing this thing to be a millionaire, and someone whose doing this because...he wants to, he feels like doing it.**

His choice of which jazz artists to listen to may be understood as affirming his image of himself as a prospective South African jazz musician with similar non-commercial motivations:

**I know that we, or all the jazz musicians, we do this for money. I mean, I also play music, and at the end I need to be rewarded, you know, but my focus is not on money. It's to make good music...for myself actually, so I'll feel happy. When I play good shows I feel happy, I mean, I won't mind even if the guy doesn't pay me. So I think like that, it's like being true to yourself. Ya, just forget about the money, the money is going to come.**

For an interviewee like Leon, on the other hand, listening to jazz was about reinforcing his belief that he has a natural affinity with the music, and was 'meant' to play it. He contrasts his relationship with jazz to his relationship with classical music, which he studied at the start of his musical training:

**...when I was young, [I could] take a hip hop tape or something, and just put it on and listen to it, and it hit me that I've never done that with a classical record. So that led me to the conclusion that, where's the connection here? I'm not living what I'm playing, I'm not taking it to another level and saying, this is my music that I want to listen to, it's just an idea put into my head a long time ago that classical music is the only higher form of music that you can play...Certain types of music touches people, and that's why some people...when they're sad, they'll put on, I don't know, some romantic love song to remind them of the past. And with jazz I can do that, I can put on a ballad, like Coltrane's "Naima", and just sit back and reflect on that, and associate with what the chap's trying to say or the feelings he's trying to convey with the song, or the way I'm feeling about it...and I can put it on and just listen to it.**

For Leon, the fact that jazz is integrated into various aspects of his lived experience is part of reinforcing his idea that as a musician, he has a personal connection with jazz.

**I think that every person that's a musician...was meant to play a certain type of music. I'm not saying that you can't play classical or jazz, it's just some things you relate to more easy in your life than other things, like I know there's a lot of coloured guys and black guys that relate more to classical music than to jazz, they get the same satisfaction out of that music that I get out of this music. So it's basically the musical talent is in every musician, but the music talent...leans towards a certain type of music.**

It is interesting how Leon preempts any interpretation of his choice to play jazz as being determined by his 'race', pointing out that many other black and coloured people may connect with classical music. In this way, his connection with jazz is interpreted as a part of his intrinsic individual identity as a musician, rather than as being determined by any external social factors. This focus on the importance of individual identity in expressing oneself as a musician is also clear in his rejection of categorisations such as 'South African jazz' or 'American jazz'. He explained that:

**I think every guy feels [jazz] in a different way. You can hear the difference between a guy playing jazz in the UK, and someone in South Africa, and someone from the States. But they're all playing jazz...it's got a certain type of sound, a personal**

**sound, depending on whose playing it...So I wouldn't call it 'South African jazz', I'd call it 'jazz played by a South African artist'.**

For Leon, jazz serves as an internationally shared musical medium through which the individual may express a personal identity.

The third way in which listening to jazz allowed for the affirmation of an identity as a musician was underpinned by the belief that in order to truly understand jazz, one must have studied it or have some experience playing it. This belief that musical training enables access to an insider meaning denied to non-musicians provided a means for jazz players to imagine an exclusive community of musicians. This process of identification was evident in the following comment of Themba's:

**I think it's hard for other people to listen to the same kind of jazz [the 'non-commercial' kind he mentioned earlier] I listen to. Because...I don't know, it's like ...you should be educated, like you must get a degree to be able to listen to it, because it's like deep music, you know what I'm saying. Like if you were coming from...[listening to] gospel, or rock, or kwaito...it might be very hard for them to like jazz music. Unless they like this commercial jazz we have in South Africa. It's not the real thing.**

Themba makes the concession that if one is not a musician, and one has grown up listening to the music, one may still appreciate it. Leon was more exclusive in marking the boundaries of a community of jazz listeners; he felt that the way a musician would listen to jazz is superior to the way anyone else would listen to it. His own musical knowledge of jazz is integral to the pleasure he derives from listening it, and to imagining an identity apart from 'ordinary listeners'. This is clear from his comparison of kwaito with jazz, and his evaluation that the latter is more 'developed':

**[Leon has just mentioned that he dislikes kwaito]**

**MR: What don't you like about kwaito?**

**Leon: Aah...there's no actual depth in the music. I don't doubt that all music has its purpose in life...but there are certain musics that are much more developed than other musics. Harmonically, they're much more deeper in certain aspects. It's not like I just prefer jazz because it's complex, it's because my understanding of music**

**is at that level where you can't listen to stuff that's below standard, it's like putting a genius in a class with guys that only understand one plus one equals two. You can't make the genius do one plus one equals two for the rest of his life. It's like the same type of situation. So it gives you more pleasure listening to that stuff, more of a challenge...in the sense that you have to know something about your instrument, you have to have studied music, you have to pay a lot of attention to it.**

In this interpretation, musical appreciation is a teleological process progressing from the simple to the complex, with music such as jazz at a more advanced stage of progress than music such as kwaito. David S. expressed a similar evaluation of the relative complexity of different genres of music, explaining that music styles such as kwaito or rap require less concentrated listening because of the focus on "jumping around" and dancing:

**Some people just listen to music because they want to jump around, and for me [listening to music] goes deeper than that. So when I hear kwaito for example, it just grates me, like, what the heck is this? It's sort of like drunk people in a studio, making something. I don't understand the language, but I watched one of their videos, and in the subtitles you can hear what the guy is saying, and it was nonsense. And I'm not just saying that because it's South African, because when I listen to rap from America I think, no, that's nonsense as well.**

Although he does not explicitly explain his desire to listen to something 'deeper' than kwaito in terms of his musical training, this is implied when he contrasts the way he listened to music before he studied jazz to the way he now listens to it:

**...before it was a case of, that song is just nice, and you know, you just listen to it, and think about something else. But now I've been trying to focus, OK, what is he trying to do? And looking at the [harmonic] changes and that type of thing.**

Common to all of the interpretations discussed above is the belief that the musical knowledge of musicians allows them to listen to jazz with a greater depth of understanding than that of non-musicians. This mode of listening invokes a community of jazz musicians from which other listeners are excluded.

I mentioned at the start of this section that, for certain of the research participants, an ethnic or racial identity informed their identity as jazz musicians, and in turn influenced their listening practices. The two individuals who best illustrate this point are Themba and David S.

Themba expressed the belief that his identity as a Xhosa has influenced his approach to playing and listening to jazz. He began by pointing out the differences between Xhosa and Zulu music as he perceives them:

**...when there are ceremonies, Xhosa ceremonies, you find like these old grannies, the way they sing, the harmonies they have, Zulus don't have it. You see like Zulus when they've got big ceremonies...they just beat drums and they dance. But [with] Xhosas it's different. In Xhosa [ceremonies] we sing and clap.**

He then explained that he feels his background as a Xhosa and the central place of melody and harmony in Xhosa music has influenced the way he approaches playing jazz:

**Themba: The music [of the Xhosas] I believe has influenced me a lot, in my career.**

**MR: It's interesting you mention the Xhosa focus on melody and harmony, so how would that aspect influence you as a drummer?**

**Themba: I'm not a drummer. I'm a musician. I've been struggling a lot to make that clear to a lot of people.**

**MR: What would be the difference?**

**Themba: uhh...'cause a drummer just keeps the beat and the tempo, has to play this pattern and this tempo, that's it. But as a musician you play music. That's my goal, is like to make drums now to be an instrument that can be melodic too, and to make music. Not just to make some noise and keep the rhythm.**

Themba explained further how this Xhosa focus on melody and harmony has influenced the way he listens to jazz played by other people:

**When I listen [to jazz] I try to understand what's happening to this guy whose playing...Like maybe he's got a song, say about a landscape...The song must make me to see, like, to have a picture of this landscape. The way he plays with his harmonies, or the way the music is...orchestrated. That should be able to make me see the vision of this landscape, you know. And then through harmonies...I can feel that, OK, he had this picture in his mind when he wrote this music.**

In this way, Themba weaves his Xhosa identity into his identity as a jazz musician through his interpretation of the influence of Xhosa music in both his approach to playing and to listening to jazz.

Similarly, David S. interpreted his listening to and playing of jazz in the light of his identity as a coloured South African. However, his focus was on the jazz he chooses to listen to, rather than on the way in which he listens to it. David started by explaining his feelings about being coloured in South Africa today:

**Black people are the only people in South Africa who I think, OK, they've got something, a certain culture, and they've got a history. I mean we all have history. But it's almost like, with the black people, it's in your face, and you can say, OK, [they came] from the early tribes or whatever...when you think of a black person, you think, they've got culture, they've got essence. But when I think of coloured people, I think, hmm, what do we have? OK, you think of Cape Town and the Carnivals that they have there, the whole musical vibe. But it's like, when you think of Durban coloured people, they laugh at [Cape coloureds and the Carnivals], so there's no link, there's no sense of continuity. And you think of the coloured people in Joburg, and it's like, what do they stand for? ...So for me, being coloured is like quite confusing. So you kind of ...tend to, what I feel I'm doing, you're latching on to somebody else's culture, so to speak, like I think of [in particular] the American way, or the western way.**

He later explained that his attempts to define himself in terms of "somebody else's culture" has influenced the jazz he chooses to listen to and to play:

**I'm into the whole western jazz thing, that's what I identify with, but I'm hoping that as I progress I can identify certain things that are unique in me and use the music to kind of bring that out.**

One could argue that his confusion as to what 'being coloured' means has prompted him to adopt an international 'western' cultural medium in order to express a personal individual identity. This has allowed him to circumvent the difficulties of defining oneself according to an unstable, unspecified group identity. However, although David describes the international jazz he listens to as 'western', at a later point in our interview he mentioned that he sometimes wonders whether the African elements in jazz are part of what he identifies with in the music:

**You know the whole thing where...the African Americans say, "we're coming back to Africa, back to our roots". And I've often thought, they're coming here to their roots, and then they go back there to America and they produce certain music. And I'm not saying now that jazz is a black thing, but there are certain African elements in jazz, and I've often thought, because I'm South African and I'm from Africa, is that what I identify with in jazz?**

Thus listening and playing jazz also allows David to explore and question his own identity as an African, and the relationship between this identity and being a South African. One could interpret his identification with the music produced by African Americans – whom, as he implies, occupy a marginal place straddling two continents – as an expression of the resonance of their situation with his own: a person who has occupied many in-between spaces in his life, firstly as a coloured person who has grown up in South Africa unsure of the significance of that label, and later as an expatriate working in Britain. David has clearly thought about issues of belonging and identity, again illustrated by his comment that "it's important to have that sense of where you're coming from, and to know where you're coming from". The potential role of jazz in this process of determining "where you're coming from" while escaping any restrictive aspects of group labels is hinted at in David's comments about the jazz of Moses Molelekwa:

**Well, if I think of Moses, the thing I like about him is that he's got an international flavour...I actually bought his CD in London. And I listened to the CD. OK, firstly the sounds were not just typically South African. What I mean by that, when I think of South African jazz I think of just the cycle, you know, people usually play I, IV, whatever chord progression, and then there's improvising, but not very much freedom to improvise, usually just like riffs that people play and stuff. But what made this guy stand out was the fact that he still had that South African vibe, in terms of that cyclical form, but he took it a step further, by improvising over those changes and adding different elements. With Moses Molelekwa's music...there are certain elements in there that I strongly identify with. And...I don't think it's just the fact that he's got this international flavour. One of the songs that I enjoy on the CD, is that song with, well, for me it's got the strongest South African vibe.**

It seems that for David, Molelekwa represents an ideal in which 'South Africanness' is expressed through an international musical genre. In this interpretation, the artist places himself as a South African while enjoying the freedom for self-expression enabled by 'international' jazz.

Throughout this discussion I have attempted to illustrate how various questions of belonging and multiple processes of identification involving issues of age, history, class, musical training, 'race', and ethnicity become imbricated in listening to South African jazz. I will now move on to an analysis of the discourses of South African rock.

# Chapter 5:
# Examining the Discourses of South African Rock

## Listening to the discourses of rock

In Chapter 1 I mentioned the frequent labelling of rock as 'white music' by research participants. In the interviews in which no music was played, this was named as the most prevalent stereotype regarding rock listeners in South Africa. However, as was the case with kwaito and jazz, the context of listening to musical examples of South African rock revealed a more complex discursive web forging links between the music and social groups.

Two qualifications of rock as 'white music' emerged during the listening interviews: firstly, that the whites in question were generally also 'young', and secondly, that young South Africans of other racial groups who had attended Model C schools would also listen to the music.

Certain musical features were mentioned consistently by those interviewed as delineating the boundaries of the 'ideal audience' of the rock tracks. For some, this audience was conceived of in racial terms. For them, features such as the voice, the guitar and the beat marked the music as 'white'. For others, the audience was conceived of in terms of taste. In this case, those same musical features marked the music as 'rock' and the imagined community of listeners as 'rock fans'. For certain interviewees, these labels coincided; to express an alienation from the genre of rock was to articulate an outsider status to the social and racial community invoked by the genre.

Ntatho constitutes an example of the latter. She expressed a dislike of the musical features of the rock tracks, and a lack of identification with the social group represented for her by the genre. She enjoyed "Bubblegum on my boots" by Springbok Nude Girls, the first rock track on the tape, until the lead vocalist started singing. In her words, "I

thought it was a really cool song 'til he started opening his mouth". She didn't explicitly connect the voice to a label of 'white music', but that seemed to be the implication. She commented that "George and his crew" would listen to this music (the only white interviewee present). Her similar classification of the listeners of "Something wrong" by Wonderboom, the second rock track on the tape, confirmed this interpretation. This time, she explained that she initially classified the song in terms of the repertoire played by a Metro FM DJ, (a 'black' radio station) and subsequently revised her classification according to the repertoire of 5FM (a 'white' radio station) after hearing the voice:

**...when the song started I thought it was one of those songs...like a person like Bertha, she's a Metro FM DJ [would play]. But then the voice came in...[and then I thought] it's something that plays on 5FM or something.**

For Ntatho, musical characteristics of rock such as the vocal style mark the genre as music she does not like, and as music with which she does not identify as a black person. After listening to "69 Tea" by Saron Gas, the third rock track on the tape, she made a comment that highlighted her awareness of the generic conventions of rock, while simultaneously expressing her lack of identification with the genre on any level.

**...I thought it was OK. What's expected in my ears when I'm listening to that type of music. OK, not that I ever listen to that type of music. There wouldn't be any situation in the world that would make me sit down and listen to that music.**

In a later comment, she makes explicit the connection between being black, and not listening to rock music:

**I have never spoken to any black person, [although] I've heard of people and seen people on TV, who said "hey man, rock, yeah, that's music"...it's not normal for a black person to want to play drums for a rock band.**

In a similar way, Tina expressed a dislike of rock in musical terms, as well as a lack of identification with the social group associated with the genre. Speaking about "OO AA" by Boo!, the fourth rock track on the tape, she commented that "when the beat started I thought, wow, this is a dance vibe, but then the voice definitely marked it as rock." She explained that she does not like rock as she finds it to be "this one mass of sound". She made a similar judgment of "69 Tea" by Saron Gas: "I would not sit down and listen to

rock. It's too intrusive, I don't like the voices, they're too the same". After listening to "Bubblegum on my boots", she described the 'ideal audience' of rock in South Africa in the following way:

**Tina: White young South Africans, and the black people who go to multi-racial schools. But it would be probably after my generation, the ones who came later.**

**MR: Why?**

**Tina: Because they're whiter than us, if you're going to put it simply like that.**

In this interpretation, rock is 'white' music, and Tina is a black person who has not been sufficiently 'whitened' by her time at a Model C school, and as such, does not identify with the group represented by rock, or with its aesthetic conventions. In a comment about "Something wrong" by Wonderboom similar to Ntatho's remarks quoted above, she remarked that "it's not bad, it's just rock". The implication is that although the track may comply with the musical conventions of the genre of rock, these conventions are underpinned by an aesthetic rejected by Tina. The mere labelling of a song as 'rock' places the music in a generic category with which she does not identify on an aesthetic or a social level. In this way, Tina's aesthetic judgments are inextricably linked to processes of social identification. I will discuss this relationship between aesthetics and social identity in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

Others interviewed took a more direct approach to labelling certain features of South African rock as markers of 'white music'. For example, Vumani interpreted the guitar as a symbol for 'white music' as a heavy bass and a strong rhythm is a marker of 'black music':

**...our music, black music, is generally based on the drums and the bass. And then if you tune to 5FM, Barney Simon's slot, you hear a lot of guitar. As a result you see a lot of posters of some white guys carrying a broom or a tennis racket trying to imitate like they're playing guitar.**

In a similar way, Zama's comments about the 'whiteness' of "69 Tea" by Saron Gas made reference to the guitar, as well as the voice. She classified the listeners of the track as "youth, 18 to 20s, white". Naming the features that prompted this classification, she

remarked, "it's the voice, and the whole guitar thing". Janice agreed with this classification of the features that make rock 'white', making the following comment in relation to "Something wrong" by Wonderboom:

**That's what I would call 'white music'. Younger generation, late teens, early 20s [would listen to it]. I think the fact that it's 'white music' has a lot to do with the instruments. The guitar. And the type of singing.**

For Devasha, it was the beat of the rock tracks that made them 'white':

**[referring to "OO AA"] I think mostly the white students would listen to that, it sounds too monotonous for the black students or Indian students to listen to it, because it's one beat. Black people won't listen to something that's just straightforward, one beat. They'll find it boring.**

Other interviewees classified the listeners of the South African rock tracks on the basis of taste, without positing a connection between these tastes and social or racial group. Such a classification was made by Linda, who felt that people who enjoyed alternative South African rock would listen to "OO AA", and by George, who thought that people who enjoy live rock acts would listen to "Something wrong" by Wonderboom.

A classification made by Nosipho illustrates the often contested and fluid nature of the boundaries of genres. She did not feel that "OO AA" was an example of rock, and classified it rather as jazz. She speculated that older people would listen to it, in line with her opinions discussed earlier about jazz listeners in South Africa being part of the 'older generation'.

Among some of the black and Indian research participants, rock music was interpreted as marking not only boundaries of 'race', but also boundaries of class. For these individuals, listening to rock music if one was not white was interpreted as a sign of having attended a Model C 'white' school, which was associated with living in the suburbs rather than the township, and with occupying a higher socio-economic position than the majority of black people in South Africa. Nosipho described to me various divisions she had noticed between students who had attended Model C schools and those who had not. I asked her

if she thought this division manifested itself in any way in music preferences, and she answered that:

**At the risk of generalising, I think those that went to Model C schools would probably have more varied tastes, and be open to more different styles. Because being a minority in a white majority, we were exposed to a lot of different styles like pop and rock.**

Devasha made similar comments, both about the divisions on campus, and about differences in taste in music:

**I think the Model C students, from what I've gathered, they've been exposed to like jazz, and classical, and rock, more of [those genres], because they mixed more with the white students, because generally speaking in Model C schools, there's more white students, and there's maybe just a few Indians and blacks.**

Both Lenny and Zama agreed with this interpretation. Lenny felt that both young whites and non-whites who had attended Model C schools would listen to "Bubblegum on my boots", and Zama thought that young people of all racial groups who had attended schools "in the suburbs" would enjoy "Something wrong" by Wonderboom. In this way, rock music was implicated not only in reinforcing boundaries of 'race', but of fracturing homogeneous conceptions of racial categories by highlighting class based divisions. On the other hand, these comments illustrate the continued equation of racial group with class position in South Africa: to engage in a middle-class lifestyle as a black person, exemplified by attending a Model C school, is to become 'whiter'. This conflation of middle-class status with 'whiteness' is exemplified by Tina's earlier comment, in which she classified rock listeners in South Africa as young whites and 'whiter' blacks.

## Rock as 'white music'[16]

In the interviews in which no musical examples were played, discussions of South African rock tended to centre around the label of 'white music'. As was the case with

[16] Similarly to jazz, some discussions of 'rock as white music' focused primarily on South African rock, while others included both international and South African rock. Where the former applies, I have used the term 'South African rock' to indicate the more narrow focus of the discussion. In places where the term 'rock' is used, both international and local versions of the genre are being referred to.

kwaito, those individuals who were excluded by this label from the 'ideal audience' of rock by virtue of their 'race' felt the need to justify their choice to listen to the music. For example, Janice, who classified herself as coloured, agreed with the dominant discourse constructing the majority of those producing and consuming South African rock as white. She also felt that due to the racial division still present within many areas of life in South Africa – such as place of residence and cultural background – the majority of rock listeners and musicians in South Africa come from a different background to her own. However, she felt that a common South African identity constitutes a shared frame of reference in which white rock musicians and non-white rock listeners could understand one another:

**Well, I think our background [of herself and the South African rock artists to which she listens] is different in the sense that we've been brought up differently. I don't know about now, because apartheid's been over for quite a while, but some of the people that are playing the music are still originally from the old white South Africa. But because all of that is changing, I wouldn't say we come from completely different backgrounds, it's just that, it's the same country, just different points of view. It's common ground, same land, same people, just different cultures.**

She provided an example of the "common ground" to which all South Africans can relate in her discussion of the lyrics of some of the artists she enjoys, which refer to elements of the landscape with which all South Africans would be familiar:

**I like the fact that [South African rock has] got a home grown style, if you listen to a lot of the lyrics that they sing it's normally got to do with something about our country or nation or our culture. And they also sing about a lot of real things, OK, I know that international people also do, but it's something you can relate to, when they talk about looking out over the flat mountain, you know they're talking about Table Mountain, and Cape Town, and you can relate to it. That's one of the things I find appealing.**

This is reminiscent of Anne's justification for her enjoyment of kwaito, a genre produced by people from a background very different to her own. In Anne's interpretation, every individual comes from a different background and a different set of experiences. However, there will always be something one can relate to as a fellow human being. In Janice's interpretation, the shared context is a specifically South African one, rather than a human one. In both interpretations a shared frame of reference diffuses the divisive

potential of difference. However, for Anne, difference is conceived according to individual experience, whereas for Janice, these differences, specifically in South Africa, are often dictated by racial or cultural categories. I will return to the significance of such interpretations of racial difference and national sameness for national cohesion in the following chapter.

For research participants such as Linda and Khaya, legitimating their choice to listen to rock involved a critique of the criteria on which they felt the majority of South Africans base their listening choices. Linda drew a contrast between people who choose their music based on what others around them are listening to, and people, such as herself, who can "think for themselves":

**Some people just listen to...certain types of music because of what other people are doing. And those people who can think for themselves and know exactly what they're looking for in music will not be listening to what everyone else is expecting them to listen to, because of their race or their upbringing or whatever.**

She contested any connection between her love of rock and her education at a Model C school, but commented that many black individuals who attended these 'white' schools have allowed the experience to dictate their taste in music:

**OK, I went to a school with predominantly white kids...but even though I stayed in a family where people listened to jazz, I still listen to alternative [rock] music. But it's not really because of my friends...I'm just different in a lot of ways because I don't seem to identify myself with groups of people, or whatever. But take another [black] kid who went to Marist Brothers [a private Catholic school where the majority of pupils are white, according to Linda]...and you put them in 'Tiger Tiger' [a Durban club playing pop and pop rock music] , they're so at home, because that's the kind of music that their friends listen to, they don't really think about what they're listening to.**

Throughout our interview, Linda vehemently defended the primacy of an individual identity over any group identity. She expressed her scepticism of the relevance of racial classifications beyond their description of physical differences:

**Linda: I'm black and that's OK, but it doesn't mean anything. I've also got short hair and big ears, like whatever.**

**MR: So you don't think that label 'black' is very important to your self-identity?**

**Linda: Not at all, the colour of my skin means about the same to me as the shape of my ears, and the size of my nose, it's just a physical thing, but it doesn't really mean anything.**

Although classifications of 'race' are meaningless to her, she expressed the opinion that the racialization of music tastes in South Africa is a consequence of people assuming that physical and racial similarities necessarily imply other sorts of similarity:

**I think people like to relate to people who look like them, which is kind of silly, because then you should relate if you're tall to tall people who look exactly like you or whatever. But the kind of music that people listen to, they're kind of brought up with it, and you want to relate to some[one] that looks like you. 'Cause even if you have nothing in common at least they still look like you, so they must have kind of the inside track on what's going on with you.**

She expressed frustration with this attitude, and remarked:

**I really wish that people would think out of the box, people should learn that everyone is the same and people should learn to rebel against their socialization of whatever nature, you know.**

For Linda, musical preference, as well as all other life choices, should be decided by each person according to their own individually determined criteria. Any choice motivated by a desire to fit into to a group provoked a dismissive response from Linda. As she put it, when explaining why she is sceptical of attempts to define a national identity:

**South Africans are all different. Like any label of being anything just doesn't really wash with me because no one is the same, you know, you speak in the same language maybe, but that's it. And you're brought up in a certain way, but it all boils down to you as the individual and what you think and what you feel about certain things...group mentality is like, nothing. It's like braindeadness, you know. So I don't believe that people should start [making decisions on that basis]...because people lose their individuality for the sake of the group, to belong and to think collectively.**

Linda explained that her choice to listen to rock music was based on her own personal, individual criteria:

**I needed something more than just like, a catchy tune. I was looking for depth in the lyrics, and the poetry behind it, and the beauty of the music, and all that kind of thing, and that's when I started listening to rock.**

In this interpretation, it is not her choice to listen to rock that needs legitimation. Rather, it is the mindset of people that leads to the label of rock as 'white music' that needs to be altered.

Khaya's explanation for his enjoyment of rock focused on the role of personal background in determining musical tastes. As I have discussed earlier, Khaya expressed a very rigid understanding of the role of an individual's background in shaping their preferences for certain types of music. However, he explained that his background was less constraining in that it allowed for him to experience diverse environments while growing up. When he was young, his parents moved house frequently, resulting in their family living in different towns and establishing various social networks. This led to Khaya hearing a wide variety of music while growing up. This allowed him to develop the habit of choosing his own music and not allowing the environment to dictate his tastes:

**Well, having moved a lot, I had to learn to build my own environment, and build my own system, because there was never one familiar environment to live in. And when I finally settled down, and I started high school, only then had I settled down in Morningside to like stay there. And so I'd been listening to all kinds of music for a long time...So it's all about what I choose, not necessarily what the environments have taught me to choose, so I'm lucky in that way.**

He considers himself to be "lucky" because this experience has allowed him to see racial classifications as social constructions, rather than as essential biological categories determining identity and culture, including taste in music. He described the constant struggle he has experienced in South Africa to maintain this awareness against social pressures to adopt 'race thinking':

**...being South African, we're so racially inclined...we've bound our identities to race, without even trying, and our superiors have bound our identities to race as well, never mind what we do. So it's definitely influenced a lot about what I think I am. But I've had to change that and form myself, and remember what I *know* I am.**

Listening to rock music has allowed him to affirm an individual identity against social pressure to conform to the perceived racial norm. He emphasised that he chose to listen to rock because the aesthetic of the genre appealed to him. To underscore the connection he feels with rock music as an individual, rather than as a member of any social group, he emphasised that he doesn't mind going to rock performances alone:

**I...got used to going out alone and just really enjoying the music. Because I'm not there for the social scene or whatever, I'm there for the music. I don't drink or anything so I never really go to shows to drink and enjoy myself that way. It's always about music so I've never minded going alone.**

Besides affirming an individual identity against stereotypes dictated by 'race' or social group, listening to rock has allowed Khaya to construct a sense of continuity in his own life. In his words,

**As I said before, I move a lot, and it's even become part of my mindset to go somewhere, stay there, and move. So I've never really belonged to something, and [been able to] say, this is where I am. But I think music has been the only place where I actually belong. It's the only place where I feel at home, because environments change, but wherever you are, if you have your CD with you, you're cool...It's a sense of belonging...because listening to a familiar song always gets that result that you want because it can't do you wrong, like people change, but a song's still a song.**

In a similar way to Linda and Khaya, listening to rock for Jamiel, Aarti, and Natasha provides a means for contesting group stereotypes and defining themselves as individuals. For these research participants (all three of whom classified themselves as Indian), the fact that rock is defined as 'white music', and that they are thus excluded from the dominant definition of rock listeners in South Africa, is precisely the source of the music's appeal. For example, Jamiel explained that he listens to a diverse range of music, one sort of which is South African rock. He expressed the opinion that in South Africa, there is a stereotype that Indian people, especially young Indian males, listen to rave music. However, he has chosen to reject this sort of music in favour of a variety of artists and genres that he feels reflect his identity as a "free spirit", and someone who does not allow social groups to dictate his behaviour. He described the processes through which racial division in music tastes is perpetuated:

**I believe that everybody has a choice, to make the choice to listen to different kinds of music, [but] I think that it's through peers and through...social places, where you have, OK, say, a group of black guys and a group of white guys, and it would be most likely that the black guys would be listening to R&B and the white guys would listen to rock...[that listening divisions are entrenched]**

He contrasted this with his own musical choices based on his individual personality:

**I've always pictured myself as like this free spirit, where I do things that I'd like to do. So I'm the kind of person that doesn't let social implications make its way into my life.**

He explained that there are various ways in which he does not conform to the social expectations of his young male Indian peer group:

**Connecting with my own [group] must probably seem to be a bit of a hassle because of what I listen to, and because of what they listen to...And with the type of music, and with dislikes and likes, I mean, because most Indian guys if you ask them...if you go and you stand by an Indian group, right, they'll probably be talking about girls...cars, sound, music. Now, if you come to my group, if you come and talk to me, I will tell you a story about the nature of life. And these people will just sit there, and be like, what? So, like, it's very hard, to connect, to find something that I can connect with.**

It could be argued that Jamiel's interpretation of his musical tastes provides a means both for expressing his feelings of being an outsider from a group defined by shared racial classification, gender and age, as well as for reconfiguring the status of outsider into the identity of "free spirit"; someone who, rather than not belonging, chooses not to allow social norms to dictate their personal choices.

Aarti and Natasha[17] expressed a similar desire to rebel against expectations of what was appropriate behaviour for young Indian women. Aarti described these social expectations in relation to music in the following way:

**Aarti: When you grow up Indian you're expected to listen to Indian music. Someone will come up to you and ask, "did you hear this song?" You are expected to have heard that song, you're expected to like that song.**

[17] These two were friends who requested to be interviewed together. As many of their answers were in the form of a dialogue between them, I have chosen to discuss them together.

**MR: Do you mean another Indian person?**

**Aarti: Ya. If you're Indian and you don't listen to Indian music there's something wrong with you.**

Natasha agreed with Aarti's description, and described the pleasure derived in confounding people's expectations of her listening tastes as a young Indian female:

**Once we [a white male friend and herself] were at Gateway [mall] and MTV was playing, and I was like, that's Creed, "My sacrifice", beautiful song, and he was like, oh my god, I've never met an Indian chick who listens to rock. I was like, how could you not? And we had this half hour discussion about it, and he was just blown away that a girl, an Indian girl, listened to rock.**

Further on in the interview they confirmed this interpretation of rock music allowing them to break the stereotype of Indian listening tastes:

**Aarti : [By listening to rock] we were able to...**

**Natasha: Break the stereotype?**

**Aarti: Ya. Get through all that pummelling of Indian music, and "rock music is bad for you, English music is bad for you".**

For Natasha it is not only the label of rock as 'white music' and therefore as 'not Indian music', but also the historical association of rock with youth rebellion that allows her to assert her individuality against social pressures to conform. In her words, "[Traditional Indian music] is beautiful music, but I guess the fact that we grew up with it makes us rebel against it. And rock is the music of rebels."

In my final example of rock music allowing for the assertion of an individual identity against social expectations, I return to the case of Janice. I have already discussed how she legitimated her inclusion in a community of rock listeners by imagining common ground in the shared experience of South Africa. However, listening to a genre of music labelled as 'white' also provided a means for Janice to affirm her identity as a young adult, against the expectations of her parents and her community. She explained how choosing to listen to rock music was part of a general process of discovering that the

people she identified with were not necessarily of the same racial classification as her own. She began by describing how her

**life has changed from being very much at home and with my family, my mom and dad, my brother, my sister, and we're all coloured, and the coloured community, and everything we do is the same. And then I'm exposed to something that's different, and even though at school I was exposed to different races it wasn't as much. And now that I'm out on my own, I actually have a choice to sit with people who have the same background and identity as me, or to sit with people who have a different background and a different identity.**

She further explained that she has more in common with a group of white girls at her university than with the coloured girls:

**I found that I didn't really get on with the coloured people at our campus, I found that the coloureds on our campus were very, very picky about the things that you wear and the way that you dress, and [constantly asked me], why are you working so hard? [And then] I found a group of girls, all white girls, all younger than me, and they're all doing the same course as me, so I found it was really nice to sit with them, and we got on, we like the same kind of music... as a person whose turning 24, I think I'm still kind of finding myself.**

Her newfound awareness of the freedom she has in shaping her own identity and in choosing whom she wants to associate with is reinforced by her choice of a music genre that is 'not coloured'. As she explained,

**...that's what's nice about growing up, you can change and get to finally have a choice, and realise that you can choose, you're not forced to listen to whatever, you can say, actually, no, I don't like that, let's try something else.**

Her feelings about other people's attitudes to her taste in music reflect a growing ease in her awareness of herself as an individual who does not have to be pinned down by conventions dictated by racial labels:

**Janice: [Listening to rock is] purely my own taste, it's become my own individual thing now, it's what I find appealing, and if Mommy and Daddy don't like it, fine.**

**MR: And it doesn't bother you, when people are surprised that you're coloured but you listen to rock?**

**Janice: No. At first I was a little bit embarrassed about it, but now I really can't give two hoots.**

In the above discussion, I have attempted to illustrate various ways in which individuals excluded by dominant definitions of the 'ideal audience' of rock justified their choice to listen to the genre. I have also highlighted how listening to a genre inconsistent with dominant prescriptions of the music tastes of racial groups may allow individuals to rebel against social expectations, and assert an individual identity. I have touched briefly on the issue of some research participants explaining their enjoyment or dislike of rock in terms of aesthetic rather than social criteria. Reference to aesthetics was also made by certain interviewees when evaluating South African jazz and kwaito. It is to this issue of aesthetic judgments of South African popular music that I now turn.

## Towards an integration of the aesthetic and the social

For some research participants, engaging with constructions that fix the relationship between 'race' and music could be bypassed to a certain extent by explaining their listening choices in terms of a seemingly abstract realm of musical aesthetics. For example, both Linda and Khaya explained that their primary reason for listening to rock was the 'music itself'. As I mentioned above, Khaya emphasised that he goes to rock performances for the music rather than for the social environment. Linda insisted that her Model C education had nothing to do with her love of rock, and that it was elements of music itself that appealed to her. Both Khaya and Linda added that it is not only individual musical features of rock that appeal to them, but the aesthetic of the genre as a whole. Linda explained that this aesthetic upholds the values of individual effort and skill in playing an instrument, and of self-expression through the creation and performance of music. This is illustrated by a comment she made explaining why she enjoys the music of Springbok Nude Girls:

**I like the fact that, a) they play their own instruments, I think I said this before, about how I appreciate musicians who actually create their own music, out of their own minds, with their own creativity...It's been carefully put together by individuals who actually feel what they're doing. And I can appreciate the effort that goes on in the making of this music, the creative process or whatever.**

She contrasts this with what she sees as being the artificiality of kwaito:

**It's not very creative, it's all synthetic, someone sat in the studio, some random man behind the computer and made this up, and then the guy just spewed forth like four words in the entire song.**

Khaya described a similar model for evaluating music that emphasised individual effort, creativity and instrumental skill unmediated by technology. He remarked that he "can't stand lack of effort in music, because music is supposed to show you power, skill, beauty". He described an experience at a Jimmy 12 Inch concert as an illustration of the importance of individual effort and instrumental skill to the aesthetic of South African rock, and explained that this skill is most apparent in the more immediate context of the live performance:

**I met [the bassist for Jimmy 12 Inch] once, and when I saw them playing live, they were playing with Saron Gas, and the bass guitarist played so hard his fingers were bleeding. He was still playing a riff, and I went to go and shake his hand, and I saw this blood, and I was like, Geez. I've never seen a bass guitarist play that fast, he would have needed a pick to do what he was doing, but he was just playing...I like the live sound, it feels a lot more organic and real. I prefer live because it really shows the skill of the band.**

He further expressed the opinion that this skill and effort should also be applied by musicians to the task of creating something that sounds new and original; music that sounds the same as that produced twenty years ago shows a lack of effort on the part of the musician. He gave this as the reason for his enjoyment of international jazz, but not South African jazz:

**I'm really into jazz, but not South African jazz. I totally hate it, because they're mostly stuck on one formula and it hasn't been going anywhere for years, so I can't really enjoy something that doesn't take steps...it doesn't show originality. Music may be a very set [range] of notes, but you can do anything you want with it, and when you don't use the power that you have, and if you've studied music and you know that you can do something and you don't, that shows weakness.**

Andile provided similar reasons for her dislike of South African jazz:

**South African jazz is too formulaic, it doesn't go anywhere, they don't really push anything forward.**

However, she named Moses Molelekwa as an exception to this rule:

**I find him to be very experimental. He does jazz, but there are tinges of other genres of music that he was going into.**

In this interpretation, the newness and originality of Molelekwa's music set him apart from other South African jazz musicians. Thus Andile is able to classify his jazz as conforming to the aesthetic model in terms of which she evaluates music. Andile made a further aesthetic judgment concerning kwaito:

**Andile: I'm not liking [kwaito] these days...it's got nothing, they don't write lyrics that say something.**

**MR: What about kwaito do you think appeals to other people?**

**Andile: Because it's probably catchy and people just want to have a good time and not really listen or think, and kwaito does that really well. You just listen to it, it's got a good beat to dance, and that stuff. Sadly, that's what people go for in music, and they call it music.**

Two criteria for valuing music are present in this judgment: the depth and 'substance' of the lyrics, and the use for which music is intended; in this case, music which is conducive to dancing and having a good time, contrasted with music that one has to "really listen" to and think about. Both of these criteria were discernable in the comments of many other research participants. For example, Zama explained that she prefers the kwaito of more contemporary artists such as Zola to older artists such as Arthur because

**the message has changed, it's not just like repeating a few silly words that don't make sense.**

Tina also motivated her dislike of Arthur in terms of his repetitive lyrics:

**I particularly dislike Arthur's little, "Oyi Oyi", "Tshisa Tshisa", "ee ee", he's always got these little catch phrases in his song that really, really annoy me...I don't like ["Oyi! Oyi!"] because I think it's childish.**

I have already quoted Linda's dismissal of kwaito based on its supposed artificiality, and on its lack of lyrical depth. She added that in kwaito tracks,

**there'll be these girls like screaming and singing the same words that he's saying. It doesn't say anything to me, it's just like dance music, it doesn't mean anything.**

A rejection of kwaito based on the perception that it is intended for people to dance to, and that it is thus has less value than music produced for other purposes, is present in this comment. Themba and David S. also considered music produced primarily for dancing as having a degraded value. I have already quoted David's belief that kwaito is just for people who want to 'jump around' and who don't look for 'depth' in the music they listen to. Likewise, Themba commented that genres such as rap and hip hop are "full of rubbish, it's just rubbish from start to end". He justified this statement in terms of the privileging in these genres of what he considers to be simplistic rhythms and shallow lyrics over melody and harmony. He explained that this is because young people prioritise a beat and catchy lyrics when choosing their music. I asked him why he believes this is the case, and he responded:

**Because they want to dance, first of all, and secondly, they just want to swear and be seen as crazy and stuff like that.**

Again, the value of this music is dismissed by virtue of the importance of dance in its consumption practices.

It seems that all of the above-mentioned aesthetic judgments may be analysed in terms of a series of dichotomies: 'high' culture vs. 'low', 'serious' music vs. 'fun' music, the mind vs. the body. I will start by discussing the first of these pairs. Frith (1998: 36-42) discusses how three different models of aesthetic value in music may be distinguished: the classical model, the folk model, and the pop model. Each of these models evolved in relation to a particular type of music, and thus each model has a varying degree of

cultural capital depending on the status of the social group with which the music was historically associated. For example, the classical aesthetic model evolved in relation to western 'art' music, which was historically associated with the upper strata of society. For this reason, the classical aesthetic model holds the highest degree of cultural capital, with the pop model associated with the music of the common masses, and thus the least valued. Frith argues that individuals may draw from one or more of these models in their evaluations of various genres of popular music – that is, any music produced using technologies of mass distribution and sold for profit. By drawing on aesthetic values associated with 'high' culture in assessing the relative value of various sorts of popular music, listeners may define themselves as an elite against 'the masses'. This argument may be applied in analysing the value judgments made by individuals such as Linda, Khaya and Andile. By applying values drawn from the aesthetics of western 'art' music such as individual effort, creativity, skill and originality, they may define themselves as an elite listening minority, choosing their music according to more valuable criteria than what "[other] people go for in music", to quote Andile.

The aesthetic model of classical music also prescribes an ideal environment in which such music should be experienced: one in which the listener may sit in silent concentrated contemplation, focusing all attention on the music (Frith 1998: 33). It is clear from the comments quoted above that this aspect of the aesthetic model of western 'art' music may also be applied to judgments of popular music: mental engagement with the music is considered superior to the bodily engagement of dancing. Frith further shows how the dichotomy between mind and body was historically mapped onto the division between the serious and fun: "the equation of the serious with the mind and fun with the body was an aspect of the way in which high culture was established in Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century" (1998: 124). This equation throws light on comments which privilege music that involves mental contemplation in its consumption over music consumed primarily in contexts involving dancing and 'having a good time'. Once again, a superior listener identity is imagined through the application of listening techniques associated with western 'art' music. In summary, by applying an aesthetic model associated with 'high culture' – emphasising the importance of individual effort, skill,

and creativity in the production of music, and the importance of the application of the mind rather than the body in the consumption of music – a listener may lay claim to the cultural capital of western 'art' music, and may construct an elite identity in opposition to the imagined listening practices of the majority.

It is clear then that aesthetic judgments may be implicated in processes of identification, and that they are not abstract from the realm of the social. Before closing this discussion, I would like to make a further point about the social embeddedness of aesthetic values. It follows from a comment made by Frith, in which he argues that "we can only hear music as valuable when we know what to listen to and how to listen for it. Our reception of music, our expectations from it, are not inherent in the music itself" (1998: 26). Appropriate listening practices regulate not only what is valuable in music, but what is meaningful. Frith makes the point that ways of listening to music are organised around generic conventions. Clearly, knowing what to listen to and how to listen for it is something that must be learnt, and this learning process is a social one – we learn from others how to listen appropriately to various genres of music to interpret their meaning and value. It stands to reason that if those we learn from listen only to particular genres of music and not others, we will learn the aesthetic and semiotic conventions appropriate to some music and not others. This lack of appropriate knowledge of how to listen to a genre with which one is unfamiliar is demonstrated by remarks made by Zama about the taped musical examples of South African rock. She started off by offering vague explanations for why she doesn't like this type of music:

**I just don't find it appealing I guess. I don't listen to this type of music, really. I don't know. What don't I like about it? I can't really point out anything, I just don't really like the music.**

In this comment, she hints at a connection between not finding the music appealing and not listening to it. Discussing another South African rock track, she expresses this idea more clearly:

**It's not that I don't like it, it's just...it's not that appealing, I'm not used to this music at all. I didn't grow up listening to it, and I still don't listen to it now, so that would make it difficult for me to like it, there's not anything interesting about it.**

In this statement, the causal relationship between not liking the music and not listening to it is clarified: she doesn't find rock music appealing because she doesn't listen to it, and never has, and therefore does not find anything about it "interesting". She has not learnt what to listen to in rock, or how to listen for it. It is clear that the criteria according to which she judges which music appeals to her are far from socially neutral or abstract. These aesthetic values are the result of growing up in a particular environment in which certain genres of music were heard and valued more than others. One could make a similar argument in relation to Khaya and Linda's adoption of a classical aesthetic for evaluating popular music. It is possible that the fact that they both attended majority white, middle-class schools has influenced their competence in and adoption of this aesthetic model. Turino shows that in Zimbabwe, it was the western-style missionary schooling that familiarised indigenous Zimbabweans with western aesthetic values, and provided them with a resource for marking themselves off from the majority as an elite few in their listening practices (Turino 2000). Again, the formation of aesthetic values cannot be divorced from social context; choosing what we like is inextricable from processes of choosing who we are. If we take Khaya's point that boundaries of 'race' and music often coincide within a particular geographical space, such as the township, it is easy to see how models of aesthetic value may become not only socialised, but racialised. This racialisation of aesthetics is clear in analyses by scholars such as Meintjies (2003), in which constructions of a black aesthetic in South Africa are unpacked.

However, it is also clear that one may replace or supplement the aesthetic values that one has acquired through socialisation with other models of value. For example, Anne did not grow up listening to kwaito music; however, she chose to listen to it, and to go into environments in which she could learn about how to listen to it. Stockfelt highlights the importance of listening context to what he calls "adequate modes of listening" for a particular genre (Stockfelt 1997: 129). He suggests that the appropriate mode of listening

is "a prerequisite of using music as a language in a broader sense, as a medium for real communication from composer, musician, or programmer to audience/listener" (Stockfelt 1997: 137). Adequate listening may be said to have occurred when a listener listens to a particular type of music "according to the predominant sociocultural conventions of the subculture to which the music belongs" (ibid). He argues that each genre of music has a few ideal listening contexts, which he terms "genre-normative listening situations" (1997: 136), in which adequate modes of listening may be applied. It seems that one of the genre-normative listening situations for kwaito, mentioned by all of those research participants who classified themselves as kwaito fans, is the club or house-party, where one may dance to the music and socialise. By going to kwaito clubs, Anne could experience the sociable, bodily engagement necessary for listening adequately to the genre. However, this choice to experience an ideal listening environment in order to learn how to listen to and value kwaito appropriately was also dependent on social relationships. Anne had friends who were familiar with the club who took her along with them. She described how rather than everybody dancing together, each person danced with the group they came with. In this way, if it were not for prior social relationships, Anne would not have been able to experience kwaito in its ideal listening context – dancing with friends. Once again, the imbrication of social networks and contexts in the process of learning aesthetic values is clear.

In the preceding three chapters, I have attempted to analyse how those research participants who accepted the dominant discourses of kwaito, South African rock and South African jazz made use of these articulations in diverse ways. I hope to have shown how such articulations were appropriated in processes of identification involving various social categories, and how the discursive linking of each genre provided a means for listeners to imagine common ground with others, as well as to highlight sources of difference and division.

# Chapter 6:
# The Role of South African Popular Music in Imagining a National Identity

In this chapter, I wish to examine various ways in which interpretations of South African popular music were involved in imagining the nation of South Africa. I will begin by discussing how listening to South African music allowed certain research participants to imagine the distinctiveness of South Africa as a nation. I will then consider how others affirmed their belief that South Africa is 'as good' as other nations by emphasising the 'international standard' of South African music. This discussion will be followed by an analysis of competing appropriations of kwaito between those who wished to use the music as a symbol of national identity, and those who perceived the music as a symbol of racial identity. I will end this chapter with a discussion of the role of music in mediating the tension between a national identity shared by all South Africans, and the diverse cultural and racial identities that co-exist within national boundaries.

## Imagining national difference

For those who listened to South African music in order to reaffirm their belief that South Africa is different and distinct from all other nations, two approaches were evident. The first approach involved focusing on the 'unique' sound of South African music as being reflective of our distinctive national identity; in this way, national difference was emphasised without being defined. The second approach involved listeners imagining through music what it is about the experience of being South African that distinguishes our national identity from that of others.

Those research participants who imagined a South African national identity through local jazz generally took the former approach. By emphasising the features of the music that they felt marked it as different from international jazz, research participants could reinforce their sense of a South African identity different from other national identities.

Rather than exploring or defining the distinctive national identity of South Africa, these interpretations merely affirmed the existence of difference between our jazz and international jazz, and our nation and other nations.

Zama's reasons for enjoying South African jazz provide an example of this focus on the distinctively South African qualities of the music:

**I love the fact that it's...jazz, but it's got this special kind of African touch to it, like the mbaqanga and the other African music influences in it. I like that so much...there's just this feeling of pride knowing that, yes, it does have some international influences, but the other South African features that are in the music, it makes me feel so proud, that it's our own music, it's different from anything you've heard in the States...this is different, it's original South African. If you listen to it anywhere else you'll know, this is South African.**

Ntatho was less clear about exactly what distinguishes a South African jazz sound from that of international jazz, but agreed that it is different and that this is part of the appeal that the music has for her:

**[I love] the feel of it, the texture, it's different, even though we were influenced by listening to jazz from America, something about South African jazz [is different], I don't know what it is.**

Shashi agreed that the unique sound of South African jazz is an important part of why she enjoys the music. She contrasted this to South African rock, which she feels does not reflect a South African identity, as it sounds too similar to international rock.

**Specifically with...South African jazz, [I enjoy it] because there's nothing like it all over the world, it's your thing. Which is why I really enjoy it more than I enjoy South African rock bands, because the rock bands sing with American accents, they do American things, so I like [South African jazz artists'] originality, I can relate to it, because it comes from where I know.**

In Shashi's interpretation, something in her as a South African allows her to relate to something South African in South African jazz, but exactly what this 'South Africanness' is remains unspecified. In the same way in the comments of Zama and Ntatho the uniqueness of South African jazz is emphasised, but no causal links are drawn between this unique sound and any specific experiences or circumstances of South African life.

One research participant, Zee, mentioned the distinctively South African experiences sung about in the lyrics as marking South African jazz as unique:

**MR: Do you think there's anything about South African jazz that makes it distinctively South African?**

**Zee: Definitely there is. Like, if you look at Miriam Makeba's and Hugh Masekela's [music], the stuff they do sounds different from what other artists from overseas are doing. I think what they sing about, they sing about their experiences, which are definitely not the same as other people. And you also like put your views into the music, and also your attitude and perceptions of how you see things, so it's definitely different that way.**

In this interpretation, Makeba and Masekela's experiences, attitudes and perceptions are distinctively South African, and infuse the music with this identity through their expression in the lyrics. However, exactly what these uniquely South African experiences, attitudes and perceptions are remain vague and unspecified.

One could argue that the vagueness of the South African identity marked by this emphasis on the 'unique' sound of local jazz allows for a particularly inclusive national community to be imagined through the music. This argument is strengthened when one examines Zama and Ntatho's responses to the question of whether they feel there is anything that makes South Africans different from other national groups. Both of them made reference to the ubiquity of diversity as defining South African experience as distinct from that of other nations. In Ntatho's words:

**I'm a South African because I'm exposed to so much diversity in one day. Because I can wear a sari without anyone saying, "eish, she's sick", and I can cook my breyani, there's just so much diversity, it's so cool,**

Rather than focusing on diversity as definitive of being South African, Zee focused on hybridity and mixture:

**I think now [South Africans are] sort of like coming together and sort of like sharing ideas from one racial group to the other, and mixing everything together... because otherwise I would hang out only with the black people and you would hang out only with the white people, but today we're mixing, we're like adopting cultures and ideas from each other.**

If national identity is based on diversity and mixture, the establishment of inclusive symbols that invoke a sense of national unity while incorporating heterogeneity is essential. As I discussed in the previous chapter, a definition of a group in terms of mixture inevitably holds the possibility for the definition of origins and the re-inscription of difference. It seems then that a cultural form that marks South Africa as distinctive without requiring elaboration of what constitutes that nationally shared distinctiveness is a particularly effective national symbol for a country defined in terms of diversity and hybridity.

Other research participants imagined a distinctive national identity through kwaito. However, unlike jazz, the features marking kwaito as distinctively South African could generally be traced back to specific features of South African experience. The 'South Africanness' of kwaito was located by most interviewees in the language and subject matter of the lyrics. For example, Anne commented:

**Anne: Obviously, one way you can be sure [that kwaito is South African] is that the lyrics root it here.**

**MR: Do you mean in the language?**

**Anne: Ya, and speaking about things, things that are here... topical issues.**

Mzi agreed that the subject matter of kwaito lyrics locates the music in South Africa. He mentioned the example of some kwaito tracks addressing criminals from the townships. He remarked, "I don't think you'd find any other genre of music where they talk about South African issues like that". He explained that artists such as Zola "talk about the guys in jail and...they're usually advising them to do good things when they come out". He added that kwaito artists often sing their lyrics in township or prison dialects.

Similarly, Tina felt that by making reference to local realities, the lyrics of kwaito root the genre in South Africa. She mentioned the specific example of kwaito artists referencing South African political issues in their lyrics, something which she explained has been done in various ways throughout the history of the genre:

**Arthur's stuff was very political, and then it became more, like, oblique...politics, like the politics of the township, like the poverty there and the things that happen there.**

Tina also felt that the kwaito music videos which focus on South African markers distinguish the genre as local in contrast to other dominant global US-based popular music genres:

**It's nice to see a nice South African video, it's nice to see like GP there [on the license plates of the cars in the music videos], it's nice to see something that's not American, so I like that, so it's definitely part of it's appeal for me.**

As was clear in the discussion of South African jazz, research participants had difficulty in explaining how musical characteristics reflect distinctive national experiences. One research participant made reference to the musical sounds of kwaito as marking the music as South African, mentioning the distinctive beat, but did not elaborate as to how this is a product of a distinctive South African experience. Another kwaito fan made reference to more esoteric features in her definition of what makes kwaito South African. In her words, "[kwaito] is loud, it's out there, you can feel the passion, it's brave, big and bold like only a South African can be".

Other than these two exceptions, it is clear that the features marking kwaito as South African can be grounded in specific local experiences. The experiences referenced in the lyrics are drawn from the lives of certain South Africans, and languages in which they are expressed are spoken by South Africans. However, it was the very specificity of the features marking the music as South African for some that provided the means for others to contest this label, and appropriate kwaito as a marker of racial difference rather than of a shared national identity. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

In contrast to Shashi's opinions about the 'American sound' of South African rock, there were a few research participants who felt that South African rock sounded different from international rock, and that this distinctive sound marked the music as South African. For example, Colin felt that some South African rock incorporated an "African beat" which gave the music an "African flavour". The individual who provided the most

comprehensive discussion of local rock expressing a South African identity was Jacqui. She had clearly given a lot of thought to the 'South Africanness' of local rock, and listed a number of examples to illustrate each point that she made. She began by pointing out that some South African rock bands distinguish themselves from international artists through their choice of repertoire, and the marketing of their music. For example, she discussed how Wonderboom display a sense of patriotism by playing covers of old South African songs, as well as in the design of the cover sleeve and title of their latest album:

**You can see [Wonderboom are] proud of being South African, especially [with] their third album, they did six covers of old South African music, Johnny Clegg, E-Void, Rabbitt, that sort of thing. And they just show you that they're proud to be South African... Their album cover has them hiding under a blanket of a South African flag... Their latest album is called *Tell Someone Who Cares*. And when you first hear that you think it means, go away, and tell someone who cares, I don't really care. But on the front cover of their album is a picture of a homeless person, and it's sort of saying tell someone who actually does care about this country, and who is going to do something about it.**

She then mentioned how Wonderboom define themselves as South African in their specifically local 'attitude'. As she elaborated, it became clear that by listening to Wonderboom, Jacqui was able to imagine a distinctive South African identity defined by cultural borrowing and appropriation:

**[Wonderboom] just have this attitude ...they add some Afrikaans, they take things from everywhere, I think a huge part of South African culture is that we just take things from everywhere, we're so eclectic, and they are too.**

A further distinguishing feature of a South African identity that Jacqui imagines and reaffirms through South African rock and South African music in general is a celebration of diversity and difference:

**Also South Africa has this thing about making really, really strange, out-of-the-ordinary [music] like Boo! and Max Normal. [South Africans] lift them up and they celebrate them, rather than sort of push them down, like I would think that your whole sort of corporate America does.**

Jacqui thus reinforces a sense of a distinctive South African national identity in contrast to that of other nations, and imagines various characteristics that constitute this 'South

Africanness'. By supporting South African music, Jacqui may also affirm her own pride in a national identity:

**I am probably biased towards South African music now, I'd rather listen to a good South African artist than a good international one because I know the international ones already have support and I'd rather listen to something, or rather buy an album...from an artist that needs support. Ya, so I am biased towards South African artists, very much. But I think rightly so, because we do have a lot of talent in this country. There's just so much to make music about. Um...whereas somewhere like America which doesn't really have that much history at all, we've got such a deep cultural history, um, that it's just amazing to sing about.**

Three other research participants utilised listening to South African music in their own efforts to define what constitutes a unique South African identity. The first of these was Nosipho, who mentioned specific South African songs and artists rather than genres. She explained that what she feels defines South African music at the moment is the lack of a 'fixed sound', and the sense of possibility this conveys. She felt that this reflects the efforts of South Africa to define itself as a nation. She discussed the song "Treasure" by Tree 63 as illustrating this point:

**There's the one song [by Tree 63], I don't know what it's called, it's something about, "my heart is where my treasure lies", that song [is an example of this]...there's this sense that with South African music, it's so weird, but we're in this exciting place where it's like, anything is possible...you kind of get that feeling with South African music, that...there isn't a particular sound really, you know? There's a sense that...there's this process going on, an evolving kind of process.**

She felt that part of the process of defining who we are as South Africans is establishing a sound distinctive from that of American artists. She mentioned Zola's music as an example of these efforts:

**If you listen to Zola, there's a sense that we're trying to get our own identity within that [music heavily influenced by American sounds], you know, not just being American, but trying to be South African...It's getting a little bit boring, we're so influenced by American style, American music, American everything, that if we don't have something South African we're just going to become saturated, you know, with that.**

She further explained that although our national identity is at present undefined and in the process of emerging, there is a general sense of optimism about being South African, and that this is reflected in our music:

**We're in a period now, especially, where it's so exciting to be South African, it's like the best thing to be South African. So I think that's what we're trying to cultivate, you know, that sense of just being proud of who we are as South Africans... [South African music at the moment] is kind of positive, and it's very, I don't know how to explain it, but there's this happiness, this positiveness, this beat, the beats are quite strong.**

Both Devasha and Emcy also defined a South African identity through music and music practices, focusing as Jacqui and others did on diversity as definitive of South African experience. In response to my question as to whether there is anything that makes the South African music she listens to distinctively South African, Devasha stated that:

**With South African music, we have different beats, different melodies, and the [languages of the] words are different...Because we have 11 different languages, so...You know, if a song is in Zulu, it's not only sung in Zulu it's sung in many different languages. So that's what makes the South African music different.**

Clearly her focus on diversity as definitive of South African music relates to her perception of diversity as a primary marker of the 'new South Africa':

**We're living in the new South African now, things have changed...that's why we are South Africans, because we have a diversity of cultures.**

Similarly, Emcy focused on the issue of diversity when defining a South African identity. However, in her interpretation it is the diverse music tastes of her family that define them as South Africans, rather than any diversity of influences within the music itself:

**[My grandmother is] Afrikaans, but she doesn't listen to Afrikaans music. Like my mom, her parents are Afrikaans, but they never listened to boeremusiek [a type of Afrikaans folk dance music], they hated boeremusiek. So you know, we're not necessarily your usual Afrikaans, stereotypical family, or your usual stereotypical English family, we're like, very much South African, there's like a balance, a little bit of everything...I'm South African, I'm diverse, I've got a taste of both worlds.**

**'International standards' and musical sameness in the South African imagination**

Although certain individuals such as Jacqui imagined a distinctive national identity through local rock, most South African rock fans affirmed a South African identity that is 'as good' as that of other nations by listening to local rock, which they emphasised was of the same 'standard' as international rock. The issue of the distinctiveness of this identity was generally ignored.

For example, Amanda explained her reasons for listening to South African rock in the following way:

**I like to think of myself as proudly South African in general, and I just like how over the last few years people have been starting to realise that we have as much talent, and are becoming more motivated, like the people overseas. That's what I like, it makes me proud to have access to bands that are here all the time, work hard, and are really, really good at what they do.**

She did not feel that there was anything in the musical sounds or the lyrics of South African rock that defines it as specifically South African, and she did not consider it to be important for a local rock band to distinguish itself from international artists. Jamiel agreed that a distinctively South African sound was unimportant to his enjoyment of local rock. Although he did not dislike South African rock with a distinctive sound, he felt that South African rock bands that want to achieve commercial success need to follow a successful formula by producing a sound similar to that of international rock artists. He felt that South African rock bands often avoid marking their sound as South African for commercial reasons:

**I think the whole thing is...it's in the business. Commerciality, if that is the right word to use. Um, it's such that if you're in the business and if you do something...that the fans like, then they will come back and listen to you...from what I gather, there is a lot of similarity between international acts and these [South African rock bands] because...why expand into something that you don't know if you can use something that you know, and the fans will come back to you, you know, and [you'll] get them to listen to your music.**

International commercial success was important to Jamiel's enjoyment of South African rock, as it allowed Jamiel to affirm a pride in a South African identity represented positively to the rest of the world:

**It's always nice to see a South African name up there with, you know, the rest of the world. And it makes you feel sort of patriotic, in the sense that, you know, they're doing something for the country. Because I mean when they look at those bands, they don't just look at the band they look at where the band is coming from, and if it's coming from South Africa that's a good thing, and they get more exposure, and as a result our country gets more exposure.**

Similarly, Emcy expressed a seeming indifference to whether or not local music sounded distinctively South African or dealt with locally relevant issues, as long as the music was 'quality':

**I don't like specifically only want to listen to South African music, or only South African music that deals with South African issues, or with history, or with present situations. If it sounds good, if it's quality, it's quality.**

However, it became clear that for Emcy 'quality' was equated with commercial success, and anything that sounded too different from what she heard on the charts was labelled as not being 'proper' music:

**...consistently good performers...consistently produce number one hits, you know, you can rely on them to always produce excellent music...I mean I don't really like Koos Kombuis or Johannes Kerkorrel, that's more like, it's alternative, it's half not even music...A lot of the stuff doesn't sound like proper flowing music, it sounds as though people are just talking.**

Once again, being at an 'international standard' is equated with not sounding too different from international rock. Interestingly, Chris, another research participant who is a fan of both South African and international rock, mentioned that he had noticed a tendency among some rock fans to judge South African rock as inferior to international rock merely because it sounds different. Rather than interpreting this different sound in terms of a hierarchy of value, he explained it in terms of the 'rawness' appropriate to a live aesthetic:

**You get people who only like international rock and don't like South African rock, because...you hear these [international] bands on the radio that are like huge, and they've recorded for years, and its very refined music. Then you get your local bands where it's quite raw and it's quite underground and stuff. So there's a lot of people who like international [rock] because it's very clean, and they don't like local stuff because it's too raw, and they find it bad, because they're not used to seeing live acts.**

Chris commended what he interpreted as the distinctiveness of certain South African rock bands. He provided Not My Dog as an example of this:

**When Not My Dog were together...they had very like African-themed songs, and they had African back up where they sing about very South African things, which was very cool because it pulled them away from international bands and made it very uniquely South African...a lot of bands try to be American and try to be something else, and I just really respect it if a band says, look, we're South African, this is our sound...There needs to be a sense of like pride in music coming from this country.**

However, Chris felt that rock music tends to have a 'universal' sound, and explained that his primary motivation for listening to South African rock was not any distinctive quality of the music, but rather to support talented local musicians:

**I think rock music is pretty universal, wherever you're from it's going to sound kind of similar...I just think [South African rock] is way underrated, and there are some really good bands that come through the country...they're just really talented guys that really get the short end of the stick with the South African music industry, which doesn't work for them really, and I just think supporting them helps them out, because they're really good bands, I really enjoy them musically.**

By showing his support for local rock bands, and explaining their lack of commercial success in terms of a flawed South African music industry rather than a lack of musical ability, Chris may affirm his belief that musicians from South Africa are equally talented to those from other nations. Once again, the focus is less on South Africans as different from the rest of the world than on South Africans being the equals of the citizens of any other nation.

Similarly to Chris, Janice felt that many rock fans dismiss South African rock as inferior to international rock because it sounds too different. However, her own feelings about

distinctive sounding South African rock were clearly contradictory. I have already discussed how lyrics referencing South Africa were part of the appeal of local rock for Janice. She also made a remark that seemed to defend the value of South African rock that sounds different from American or British rock:

**I think South African [rock artists], they all have their own styles, they're not less than anyone else from any other country, it's just that we've never accepted and appreciated it, because we're still influenced by the American culture, and what the English do. So before, it was like, what are these guys trying, they sound so not real, you can hear that it's not professional. And yet it's not that it's not professional, it's just that it's home grown.**

However, in a later comment Janice evaluated South African rock in terms of how similar it sounds to international versions of the genre:

**I think also our instruments have gotten better over the years, so now the sound sounds more 'real'. If you listen to a song by Prime Circle and an American band that sounds similar, if you listen to it for the first time and you don't know the difference, you could say they sound like they come from the same place, unless you listen to the lyrics. So I think they're more or less on the same level [as international rock artists] now.**

This conflation of equality with sameness when comparing local to international sounds was found predominantly among fans of South African rock. Only two research participants who were not rock fans interpreted local music as affirming the equal status of South Africa with other nations. These two interviewees mentioned the 'international standard' of local jazz as contributing to their enjoyment of the music. Some might interpret this tendency among South African rock fans to evaluate local rock in terms of its similarity to international rock as indicative of a hegemonic imposition of the US popular music industry swamping local markets and stifling local music forms. Mitchell discusses how some scholars have taken this approach in dubbing local rock in New Zealand as "the sounds of nowhere" due to its derivative sound and style (Mitchell 1996: 215). However, Homan argues that one cannot assume that local musicians choosing to play in a universal idiom is the result of US cultural imperialism. He shows how, in the case of Australian rock, "[r]egional difference, whether or not it objectively exists, is actively sought and played out within a variety of production/consumption contexts and

(mis)perceptions" (2000: 32). He suggests that in understanding local manifestations of a universal music form one should examine "ways in which local scenes may or may not adopt international practices to their own ends, [and] the extent to which mythologies of difference become real strategies of belief" (2000: 33). He goes on to analyse how these 'mythologies of difference' of Australian rock focused on a 'live' sound, and were intertwined with the construction of an historical narrative of Sydney pubs, the sites around which the performance of rock was organised. Rather than explaining South African rock that sounds indistinguishable from US rock in terms of cultural imperialism, is seems useful examine to what extent local mythologies of difference exist in the South African context. Whereas local difference was actively sought and grounded in local space in the context of Australia, Carol Muller (1997) suggests that 'white' South African popular music during the apartheid era was constructed in such a way as to eliminate traces of local difference, in order to allow for an international English-speaking community to be imagined. One may speculate that it is this absence of a mythologised history of local difference that renders rock less suitable than other genres for affirming a distinctive South African identity. However, this point should not be overstated, as it is equally clear that creative individuals may seek out and celebrate difference in local rock, as was illustrated in the above discussion of Jacqui.

**Claiming kwaito**

I have discussed above how research participants constructed the South Africanness of kwaito by distinguishing traces of the experience of South Africans in the genre. However, in a country in which experience is still deeply fissured by divisions of class and 'race', these national markers are common to the experiences of some groups of South Africans and not others. Thus, the potential exists for these 'South African' markers to be claimed as representing sub-national identities. For example, the experiences narrated by the lyrics of kwaito were located by some as specific to the national space of South Africa, and by others as specific to the experience of black South Africans from the township. In a similar way, the language of kwaito lyrics was interpreted by some listeners as marking the genre as representing black South Africans, and by others as representing South Africa as a nation. In this section, I wish to focus

specifically on the two contesting interpretations of the significance of the language of kwaito lyrics, and the implication of these for understanding tensions in South Africa between a shared national identity, and an exclusive racial one.

There were two main approaches to interpreting the community represented by the languages of kwaito lyrics. The first was motivated by the belief that black people understand 'black languages' and so listen to kwaito because they understand the lyrics, whereas people of other racial groups are excluded from this community of comprehension. The second approach was underpinned by the notion that the meaning of kwaito does not lie in the literal meaning of the lyrics. Some individuals who adopted this second approach interpreted language as a signifier of a particular linguistic group rather than as a means for communicating a message. These interviewees generally highlighted the mixture of languages present in kwaito, and the incorporation of a few words of English or Afrikaans into the vernaculars of pre-colonial South Africa, and thus imagined the diverse national community of South Africa through kwaito. Other individuals who took this second approach downplayed the importance of the lyrics of kwaito altogether and focused on other aspects of the genre as meaningful. In this interpretation an individual was not necessarily excluded from the community of kwaito listeners if s/he did not understand the meaning of the lyrics, as long as s/he could access the meanings of the genre in some other way.

Mzi, Colin and Natasha provide examples of the former exclusionary interpretation of the community of kwaito evoked by the language of kwaito lyrics. Mzi felt that kwaito in general appeals more to blacks because they can understand the lyrics. He provided the example of a song by a kwaito artist that only achieved popularity outside of a black listenership when English lyrics were incorporated[18]:

**There's this guy, he had a nice song, his name was Mapaputsi, and his song was very big, but not many white people listened to the song. But [then] they actually took his beat, and then they put Eminem's lyrics on top of it, and everyone liked it, well most people, I met white people who listened to it, and said it was nice. That's why I think**

[18] He could not remember the name of this song, and I was not able to identify it.

**it's the lyrics and the language that they don't understand that makes it mainly for the black people.**

Mzi mentioned that blacks from the township, the rural areas, and the suburbs tend to understand the 'lingo' used by kwaito artists. In this way, the language of kwaito invokes a community of black South Africans united by a shared linguistic comprehension.

Colin and Natasha both expressed feelings of exclusion from the community of kwaito stemming from their inability to understand the lyrics. Colin remarked that he could listen to kwaito occasionally, but because lyrics are very important to his enjoyment of music, lyrics in a language he does not understand constitute a barrier to appreciating kwaito. In his words:

**There's...a limit to how much I can listen to that kind of music, like kwaito and stuff, because a lot of it's in Zulu, Xhosa, and I obviously don't understand those languages.**

Natasha explained that both lyrics and musical sounds are important in her enjoyment of a particular song. She remarked that she is often curious about the meaning of kwaito lyrics, as certain English words are included which arouse her interest in the subject matter of the song. However, she cannot understand the pre-colonial indigenous African languages used, and so feels excluded from the genre. She discussed the specific example of Zola's song "X Girlfriend":

**[Some kwaito artists] sing half in their language and half in English. I like it because it sounds good, but I don't know what it means. And there's this new guy who came up with this song called "X Girlfriend". Now that [phrase] is not in the song, but it's in his language...so I'm like, what does this mean?**

In contrast to the above exclusionary interpretations, Nosipho believed that the languages of kwaito lyrics should be understood as representing the diversity of linguistic groups in South Africa, rather than as conveying messages directed only at speakers of the language. Nosipho felt that 'mixture' was the defining characteristic of South African popular culture at present. Listening to linguistically hybrid music such as kwaito allowed her to affirm this belief:

**If you listen to kwaito music...there's a mixture of languages. You'll find Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, you know, English, Afrikaans, slang Afrikaans. So it's like that [in South Africa], you know, that whole mixture.**

In this interpretation, kwaito is claimed as 'South African' rather than as 'black', as the languages of the lyrics are understood as representing the diversity of the nation as a whole. A similarly inclusive interpretation of the community of kwaito was found among other interviewees, who stressed that understanding the lyrics is unimportant to appreciating the genre. For example, Anne is able to speak and understand some Zulu, but is not able to understand all the lyrics of kwaito. However, she explained that she does not find that this poses a barrier to her enjoyment of the music, as she believes that the act of dancing to kwaito and physically engaging with its rhythms is more important than understanding the lyrics. She remarked that:

**[Appreciating kwaito] is more about the rhythmic aspects of the music. It's a feeling, a sort of forceful and driving beat. There's something nice about that.**

Tina agreed that being unable to understand the lyrics of a kwaito track did not mean one could not enjoy it. She provided the example of kwaito lyrics in Shangaan, a language she does not understand. She explained that when an artist sings in this language, she is still able to get an idea of what the song is about by watching the video. She also felt that by being familiar with the various dances that develop around certain kwaito tracks, and by performing the appropriate dance when a particular track is played, a listener who does not understand the lyrics may still enjoy and participate in the music. In this way, linguistic barriers may be transcended.

By contesting the elements of kwaito that determine the genre's 'true meaning', listeners could claim the genre as representing groups defined according to varying degrees of exclusivity. In this way, listening to kwaito was implicated in the negotiation of various boundaries of difference, including those of language, 'race' and nation. One may conclude that the indeterminacy of the location of meaning amongst the various elements comprising any music genre or text contributes to the instability of attempts to claim music as representing identity. One may also understand contesting claims over kwaito as part of the process of negotiating which aspects of our identities are shared as South

Africans, and which are exclusive to particular social groups within the nation. In the following exchange between Tina and George, this process of negotiation is manifested in the contrasting reactions to Mandoza's crossover kwaito, discussed in the previous chapter:

**Tina: Why is [Mandoza] being criticised? Surely if we are all aiming for this post apartheid South African ideal, surely then it is a good thing for kwaito to cross over to other people? [...]**

**George: Because people will always want to own something.**

**Tina: But then it's being owned nationally, surely? Then what's the problem? Why is it when whites like it, suddenly it's not black anymore? [...]**

**George: There's a feeling that it's been appropriated, it's been stolen. It's not like, we're all sharing, it's like, they're taking it from us.**

Here, Tina and George discuss two interpretations of white South Africans listening to kwaito: as part of the process of constructing a shared national identity on the one hand, and as the appropriation and theft of a symbol of blackness on the other. Neville Alexander addresses this issue of the tension between inclusive and exclusive identities in South Africa. He suggests that South Africans need to work towards an ideal where each citizen holds multiple social identities, all of which fall under an overarching national identity (2002: 107). Alexander goes on to argue that one of the greatest threats to the accomplishment of a shared South African identity encompassing all others is the degree of linguistic diversity within the nation, coupled with the absence of a shared means of communication. Following from this, one could argue that engaging with the divisive potential of language through music by contesting exclusionary interpretations of the language of kwaito lyrics is particularly important for establishing a shared national identity.

Kwaito was not the only type of South African music involved in the exploration of the tension between sameness and difference in South Africa. It is to a more comprehensive discussion of the role of popular music in this process that I now turn.

**National homogeneity, social difference and music**

Balancing national homogeneity with sub-national heterogeneity is not a challenge specific to South Africa. In fact, it is necessary for the formation and continued coherence of any nation. Wade (2000) suggests that much of the writing on nationalism has addressed the difficulty of reconciling the equality of all citizens evoked by images such as Anderson's imagined community (1991), with the continued existence of social difference within the nation based on categories such as 'race', class and ethnicity. Cohen has also noted the tension between unity and difference within the nation. In particular, he discusses how national symbols tend to "[paint] the gloss of commonality" over the various disparate social elements that comprise the nation (1989: 109). He suggests that this tension between national and sub-national identities has become particularly acute in recent years, as the latter have increasingly come to provide a more "convincing level of sociality to contrast with the national...entities which are recognised increasingly as having failed to deliver the economic and political goods. This failure itself breeds another: the bankruptcy of the higher level entities as socio-psychological repositories of identity" (1989: 107). Touraine (2000) takes this idea further and shows how in the context of globalisation, national units are increasingly unable to provide the norms through which social behaviour is regulated. Previously, social life and economic activity were integrated by the nation state. However, under conditions of modernity these two aspects of human experience have split apart and have been reduced, in Touraine's view, to the international flow of capital, and insular, authoritarian cultural identities. As the nation state is no longer able to reconcile these two elements of life, a national identity is becoming increasingly irrelevant to citizens. Accordingly, national identity no longer provides the overarching category encompassing heterogeneous sub-national identities.

For the research participants, South African popular music was implicated in the pull between difference and sameness within the nation in three ways: for some, it provided an arena in which this tension could be explored, and for others, it was appropriated either as a marker of the continued existence of social difference, or of the increasing sameness of the experiences and identity of South Africans.

Nosipho constitutes a particularly complex and nuanced example of the role of music in exploring tensions between homogeneity and heterogeneity; inclusive and exclusive communities. In earlier chapters I touched on the contradictions inherent in some of her comments in which she criticised the labelling of some music as 'black', while simultaneously utilising such articulations in her own processes of identification. It became clear that this ambivalent attitude to the racial labelling of music sprang from the contradiction between her desire to mark boundaries of belonging around 'her' groups, affirming her insider status as black and as Zulu; and her simultaneous reluctance to exclude others from belonging. Her descriptions of prior experiences of exclusion provide a backdrop for understanding this conflict. Nosipho explained that she has often been made to feel like an outsider. Initially she experienced this as a member of a racial and linguistic minority in a 'white' English school, and later as a black girl with a 'white', Model C accent, ridiculed by many of her black peers for the way she spoke. She was also made to feel excluded from belonging by some of her relatives because of her poor command of isiZulu in relation to her fluency in English. These experiences have led to a strong desire to feel like a group insider. She provided the example of wanting to feel 'Zulu', and being frustrated by her inability to express herself in the language:

**It's so nice to belong to a certain cultural group, and there's so many nice things that come with it. So not to be able to express yourself fully in [isiZulu] is a bit demotivating, demoralising.**

Although Nosipho expressed her desire to belong, she had reservations about allowing her identity to be determined entirely by her racial or cultural group She explained that her group membership

**doesn't make me 'me', you know. There's so many things that make me who I am, it's not just my culture. That's just an aspect of me.**

She further commented that many South Africans do not acknowledge this, and believe that they must affirm their group identity by protecting it from outsiders, and thus exclude them. In her words:

**A lot of people still have that mentality, you know, that apartheid, and post-apartheid kind of mentality, "I must protect my culture and identity".**

As she became aware of the multiplicity of referents for her identity, she became more able to relate to South Africans from other cultural and racial groups on equal terms, and felt less of a need to protect her cultural and racial identity from outsiders. In this way, the balance between her feelings of racial and cultural difference, and her identification with a nationally shared identity shifted. She explained how her attitude towards 'white music' while at school provides an index of her changing feelings about her 'blackness' as a marker of difference from other South Africans:

**When I was very young, say from Kindergarten to Std 5, I listened to ['white music'] a lot. Obviously I was exposed to it a lot, because there were very few other black students, about three others, so we didn't have a say [in] what radio station we listened to on the bus on school trips, so it was generally pop music and rock music, stuff the white kids liked. And at that age, you really just need to fit into a group...so I listened to a lot of music like Roxette and that stuff...And then about Std 2, 3, 4, 5, at that age when you're starting to develop your own identity, I began to question, you know, who am I, where do I fit in to this whole mixture? And there were two other black girls in my class, one Indian girl, one black girl and myself, and we called ourselves the All Black Squad, the ABS...at that time, if it wasn't hip hop, I wasn't interested, if it wasn't R&B, or soul, I didn't want to listen to it. I think as a minority, one is under more pressure to try and keep one's identity. But then it changed again, in high school, there were more black students in my class, about nine or so, so it was like, "oh my goodness, this is wonderful, I can actually choose my friends, I'm not forced into who I hang around with". So with more other black people in the class we had more say [about what music was played at school social events], because we weren't so much in the minority any more. So then on those class excursions in the bus the white kids would say, we want to listen to 5FM, and we would be like, no, it has to be Metro.**

In her early school years, her desire to erase her blackness as marker of difference in a majority white environment by embracing 'white music' is clear. As she reached puberty, her desire to valorise her difference as a black subject in a white environment was manifested in her rejection of all 'white music', and her and her two friends' defiant celebration of all 'black music'. Later on in high school, Nosipho became less self-consciously aware of her blackness as a source of difference, and reached a point of accepting being black. She went on to explain that as she no longer felt the need to defend her identity against subsumption into whiteness, she gave up her actively resistant attitude towards 'white music', and has recently developed an enjoyment of certain 'white' genres. In the following comment, it is clear that Nosipho has reconciled her past

experiences of 'race' as a marker of difference with her present awareness of the increased integration of South Africans of all racial groups:

**Ten years down the line [after the end of apartheid], it's now, you know what hey? We're all people, I mean really, don't stress your life out by trying to retain that 'Africanness'...your blackness and pride...you still are African. And you know, you can't change your roots, you can't change who you are and whatever, but at the same time, there's just more of an integration...between black and white people, there isn't that division anymore. I mean we're living in the same areas, we're studying in the same universities, we're going to the same schools, we're beginning to understand each other more...that understanding has led me to be able to appreciate more aspects of other cultures and other people.**

In this interpretation, differences created by 'roots' are mitigated by shared experiences that allow for mutual comprehension and communication. Although the picture painted by Nosipho is rosy, it clearly refers to experiences shared by a minority class-based group within South Africa – the impoverished many still do not attend the same schools and universities as the economically privileged or live in the same middle-class suburbs. The image constructed erases the continued existence of faultlines that threaten to fracture this integrated nation, and portrays the differences represented by cultural and racial groups as co-existing harmoniously within a common national context.

Although Nosipho's story of her attitude to 'white music' constructed a teleological narrative moving from division to integration, her discussion of her feelings while attending a Thandiswa Mazwai concert made it clear that her efforts to resolve the tension between a national and a racial identity are ongoing. She explained how attending this concert provided a catalyst for her enjoyment of Mazwai's music in other contexts:

**The Thandiswa Mazwai CD [*Zabalaza*] I first heard in my parents' car, and...I didn't enjoy it that much. And then I went to her concert and I heard it live and saw her. Her concert was at the BAT Centre and there was like mostly young...black people. And there was like this whole, I don't know, it just invoked this whole pride of being black and whatever, and it was young, it was vibey, everyone was dancing and whatever, and just seeing her live and her passion for it, that changed my perspective on her music completely. So now I listen to it anywhere.**

She further explained how Mazwai's music reflects her own experience of trying to find an identity as a young black South African that reconciles her cultural heritage with the context of a modern, cosmopolitan South Africa:

**[Mazwai's music has]...got a traditional sound...but then she re-mixes it to have like a young, vibey feel...the whole CD is about her trying to find her identity as a young South African...at this stage, and trying to find out where she's from, her roots and that sort of thing...And I think it's so cool, because it's exactly where a lot of South Africans are. Especially our generation, we were caught in the after-apartheid era type of thing...we're not in that..."you're black, you're African" [imitates an impassioned speech-making tone, shaking her fist in the air]. It's now, well, even the whole concept of being African is like completely changing, it includes so many people now, and then there's the western influence, so it's like a battle to keep your identity, you know. So in [Mazwai's] music there's that whole African feel, but at the same time moving forward and embracing the whole western and pop and whatever influences as well. Ya, I mean, we're very complex, there are so many things that are influencing us now, and it kind of comes through in her music.**

It is clear from these comments that for Nosipho, listening to Mazwai's music is involved in exploring and affirming a black post-apartheid identity. However, while at the performance, Nosipho felt a sense of sadness that people who were not black did not feel welcome at the concert:

**When I was at the Thandiswa Mazwai concert, even though there were no, or there were one or two white people there, but I kept feeling like, if there were more white people here, they would enjoy it just as much. Because it was so nice, just like the culture, you know? And...I noticed there was also this Indian guy there and he was really enjoying it, and whatever, and I just felt like if people didn't look at it as, OK, this is a 'black concert', [they would also enjoy it].**

In this way, Nosipho simultaneously celebrates a sense of young black solidarity and imagines the contradictions specific to being black in contemporary South Africa, and longs for a racially inclusive South African identity to be realised in a shared experience of the 'culture' expressed through Mazwai's music. Once again, through music, Nosipho expresses her desire to affirm her own sense of belonging without inflicting on others the feelings of exclusion with which she is so familiar.

In Nosipho's discussion, the tensions between racial difference and national sameness are explored, but are not ultimately resolved. A different, more extreme approach is evident

in Mzi's expression of his desire for the erasure of all difference through 'western culture' and 'white music'. I asked him if he thinks there is at present any culture that all South Africans share and he responded:

**No, I don't think so, I think people are still trying to keep their culture, and these people are keeping their culture, those people...but I'm sure that in the coming years, the English culture, every person will be taking the English culture. Because you're finding people from the rural areas and they go to Model C schools, and then when they go home they're pretty much English and everything. Some of them don't even understand their home language. So I think the English culture is going to be taking over, I think that's the only culture, I think the other ones...it will be difficult for the people to understand, like...Xhosa, but English is like a global thing.**

In this view, the transcendence of cultural barriers is only possible through their destruction by a global English culture, manifested in the acceptance of music genres such as rock. This is clear in the following exchange:

**MR: Do you think music has the potential to bring different groups together in South Africa?**

**Mzi: Hmm...I think maybe if people were exposed more to rock, some people would actually fall in love with the music, so I think music has a big role to play, if it's exposed to the people.**

This is reminiscent of Touraine's vision of the two extremes possible in attempts to reconcile diversity with equality in modern societies, which he outlines in the following way: "living together and setting aside our differences or living apart in homogeneous communities which communicate only through the market or through violence" (2000: 48). Mzi's view is an illustration of the former approach, in which differences are denied and set aside in favour of a dominant homogenous culture. Imagining this national (and global) sameness is facilitated through imagining a universal enjoyment of a particular genre of music, associated with the dominant culture.

Emcy was the research participant whose views concerning the resolution of the tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity were the furthest from Mzi's. She prioritised cultural difference over national homogeneity, but unlike Touraine, did not necessarily see this as precluding the possibility of intercultural communication. She agreed with

other research participants about the existence of racial division in music preferences, but did not see these divisions as problematic. In certain comments, she seemed to conflate 'race' with culture, and at one point I explicitly asked her whether she feels different racial groups in South Africa have different cultures. She responded:

**I'd rather say that our cultures are unique. I won't say that they're different. Well, of course everybody's different. But that's what makes life so wonderful, it makes you unique. I won't say it makes us divided...no, it just makes us unique. People should be allowed to have options, should be allowed to have choices, say I don't like that, I like *that.* I'm sticking to this, I'm sticking to that. And it shouldn't be seen as a problem.**

I then asked her if she did not see a potential danger of turning people into stereotypes by assuming their musical preference from their 'race', and she responded that maintaining and protecting difference is important, but acknowledged that cultural and racial difference do not always coincide. She then suggested that celebrating difference did not necessarily have to rely on stereotypes. She explained that when people assume things about her because of her 'race', she takes pleasure in confounding their expectations:

**I've been stereotyped a lot, I constantly get stereotyped – because I'm white I don't know this, because I'm white I probably won't go there, won't do this, don't like this, I only listen to this. ...I think you've got to just have a good attitude about it. Don't go and be racially sensitive...Because you're actually teaching that person something new. You're actually showing that person that the stereotype isn't true...it's cool, you're just being diverse.**

She felt that this maintenance of diversity is important, as it is the definitive quality of a South African national identity. She concluded that whether difference is related to one's racial classification or one's individual identity, South Africans should accept it and not negate its existence:

**I think people must be thankful that they are unique that they are different, I think people should be more accepting, open minded...towards difference, people are very scared of difference.**

One could speculate that Emcy's strong feelings concerning the protection of difference relate to her observations that many of her Afrikaans friends have chosen to deny their cultural heritage because of feelings of guilt about the actions of their ancestors.

Although Emcy felt that this was an understandable attitude, she stressed that Afrikaners should find a way of reconciling themselves with their past without denying its existence. Regardless of her motivations, it is clear that by emphasising that South Africans should be allowed to listen to whatever music they want, and to reject what they don't like, Emcy is able to reinforce her belief in the importance of sub-national heterogeneity, and express her resistance to enforced national homogenisation through the denial of difference.

In a similar way, Ntatho, Shashi and Natasha all used South African popular music to explore and highlight heterogeneity within South Africa. For Ntatho, listening to kwaito was clearly part of marking an aspect of her difference from certain others within South Africa who did not share her experience of growing up in the township. I have already discussed her description of the pride she felt first hearing kwaito in the townships, a music "to call our own", the invoked 'we' clearly referring to young black township dwellers. The environment in which she currently listens to the music is also racially marked; in her words, house-parties at which "darkies get together". She remarked that she had never seen a white or Indian person buy a kwaito CD, and saw racialised differences in music taste such as these as inevitable and unremarkable, explaining them in terms of the different environments in which racial groups are socialised. She felt that racial division is still a reality in South Africa, commenting that

**If you walk into a [University] department...the whiteys are here, the darkies are here, the Indians are here. I suppose it's a matter of not exactly colour, but it's a matter of relating to what you're used to...as much as we'd like to say, "we live in the rainbow South Africa, we love one another", it's true, but we lived in apartheid, like ten years ago...[and] there's still that thing that says ten years was not enough.**

Yet, in other comments, Ntatho professed the unimportance of her blackness to her identity, and discussed experiences that she feels are common to all South Africans. In one remark she claimed, "I don't think my race plays a part in anything. Other blacks would probably kill me for saying this! Even if I was purple or yellow, I'd probably still be the Ntatho you see now". She remarked that post-1994, South Africans have grown up surrounded by diversity. In her words, "we grew up having a best friend that's Cathy

McGraw, or whatever...our generation...we are experiencing the whole, 'we are one' thing." She also felt that class differentials between blacks and whites are being eroded, and that all racial groups are embracing aspects of a modernised western culture:

**...go to any high school. The kids are wearing basically the same thing, Levis, Nikes. You would have never found that in the past, where it would have been the darkie kids are coming to school with no shoes, stuff like that. Now everything is getting to a level where everyone is plus-minus the same.**

In this way, Ntatho made clear her dual awareness of heterogeneity and homogeneity in South Africa; the simultaneous existence of differences stemming from historical racial divisions, and similarities stemming from shared experiences within South Africa (one could again argue that these experiences are circumscribed by class position rather than being common to all South Africans, as Ntatho implies). Listening to kwaito marks one side of the tension in her experience between racial difference and national sameness.

Music also enabled Natasha to imagine heterogeneity between racial groups within South Africa, but in a different way. For Natasha, the focal point for exploring the tension between integration and difference is the live rock performance. She began by stating that she enjoys rock concerts because, although the audience is still majority white, anyone who has a love for rock, regardless of 'race' or background, can participate and enjoy the music. In the following remark, the implication is that through rock, South Africans may experience a real sense of integration – in opposition to what she sees as the artificial national rhetoric of the 'rainbow nation' that perpetuates rather than erodes 'race thinking':

**I think we're sick and tired of harping on apartheid and being force fed it, and then it's changing and then we're force fed that as well...the fact that it's the 'rainbow nation', it's the new land of opportunity. It's not. That's the downside, it is for someone else, not for you, again. So rock, it doesn't discriminate. I know the boy bands have been criticised for being too white, even our cricket team was criticised for being lily white. But rock just applies to everyone.**

However, it is in the context of the rock concert as a space of racial mixing that Natasha speculates about differences in the experience and attitude between blacks and Indians in post-apartheid South Africa. In the following exchange with Aarti, speculations are made

about the reasons for the 'less reserved' attitude of black audience members at rock concerts, making reference to their more secure position in post-apartheid South Africa, and the relative lack of social pressure that Natasha and Aarti imagine they experience.

**Aarti: [speaking about the black audience members that she has observed at rock concerts] I think with the black people they enjoy themselves anywhere. They don't care, they go and enjoy themselves.**

**Natasha: I think they understand that they didn't have this chance before, so let's make the most of it. But Indians are a bit more reserved. I think so.**

**Aarti: The majority of them are more reserved than black people.**

**Natasha: I think we're still afraid of...it [the racial tolerance towards Indians] is going to change.**

**Aarti: Or, oh my god, someone's going to see me at the rock concert.**

**Natasha: ...and going to tell my mother.**

They continued to discuss the restrictive social expectations experienced by Indian young people, especially young females, at some length. In this way, the rock performance is simultaneously a space where racial integration may be experienced, where "everyone comes together regardless of what colour skin [they are]", and an arena for imagining differences in the social experiences and political security of racial groups in contemporary South Africa.

Similarly, it was clear that music allows Shashi to explore the relationship between national homogeneity and racial difference in South Africa. By narrating the history of the reception of the music of a particular band, Shashi could trace the changes in the balance between national integration and racial division. Her comments related specifically to the declining popularity of Mango Groove:

**Shashi: And I think if you look at Mango Groove, they've sort of faded out because they don't have that niche in time any more, where it's sort of a white band, black band,. white music, black music merging anymore. They've lost their hold. Their very calypso song that came out a while ago didn't grab people the way their previous albums did, because they've lost their hold, things have changed, and if**

**they'd had their fingers on the South African pulse then maybe it would have been a more successful album.**

**MR: How do you think things have changed?**

**Shashi:...at [one] stage [in] South Africa, black, white, every race was coming together, that amazing period in 1994, and [the] rainbow nation, everybody was sort of thinking the same way. Now things have sort of separated out, if you think of [editor of the student newspaper's] editorial, how you have the black table and the white table and the Indian table in the dining halls...And I think for a band like Mango Groove, with a white singer, white people backing, I don't know who produces their albums, but I think for them to try and tap into a township thing like kwaito has done, would be really difficult. I think they do have black musicians...maybe it's just because they're getting older now.**

In this interpretation, a band whose appeal was based on a celebration of the blurring of racial boundaries has lost popularity as it no longer reflects the lived experience of South Africans, in which the social divisions maintaining racial boundaries are a reality. For this reason, a band comprised of whites and older blacks cannot produce music congruent with the experiences of young South Africans in which racial division is a social fact. In Shashi's interpretation, it is for this reasons that musical forms such as kwaito, which do not deny these differences, have grown in popularity.

Listening to music also allowed Devasha to explore heterogeneity in South Africa. However, rather than focusing on heterogeneity as a source of division, she imagined the experience of diversity as a source of unity for all South Africans. She felt that the choice to embrace and learn about the diverse cultures within the nation was the definitive quality of being a 'new South African'. Devasha believed that music could play an important role in allowing South Africans to experience and learn about cultural diversity, and in so doing, could contribute to building an integrated, unified national identity around this shared experience:

**...we're living in the new South Africa now, things have changed...that's why we are South Africans, because we have a diversity of cultures...If you're gonna just have *your* culture, and *your* music, if you're gonna say, "I don't want you to listen to my music, 'cause it's my music", then it's not fair, because we're living in a diverse South Africa, everybody needs to be exposed to everybody else's music tastes and**

**languages, otherwise we're not going to know about the different people that live in this country.**

It became clear that music was one of the primary resources on which Devasha drew in her efforts to penetrate boundaries of difference. The main reason that Devasha gave for listening to kwaito music was that it provided an entry point for starting conversations with Zulu-speaking listeners about the music and about the subject matter of the lyrics:

**I'm enjoying [kwaito] because I'd like to know the Zulu language. So if I listen to a...song, if somebody who's black is standing next to me and who's speaking Zulu and the song is Zulu...like I'll ask them, you know, "what does it mean?", because I also want to know what the words are...You see when the black students listen to it, and they're laughing and they're giggling, so it's like I'm intrigued, and I'm like, "why are you giggling, why are you laughing, what does this mean"?**

She imagines a reciprocal desire in others to learn about her culture, represented by its music: "...when we listen to our [music with our] ethnic languages, they are also intrigued".

Further, by listening to a wide range of music associated with racial and cultural groups other than her own, Devasha may contest the efforts of others to reduce her individuality to a stereotype determined by her cultural and racial group:

**...if we're going to stereotype people, it's like judging people. If you're going to categorise Indians, and say Indians only listen to Indian music, whites only listen to a certain type of music, you categorise them, and you're...giving them one identity. And each individual has a different identity, so by stereotyping you're reducing the person's individual identity.**

In contrast to this affirmation of eclecticism, at other points in our interview Devasha implied that in order for diversity to be maintained as the definitive South African experience, certain boundaries of difference should not be blurred. This belief was revealed in a comment she made about individuals in South Africa adopting the accents of other groups:

**I find it...hysterical when the white students try and talk African, they'll say [imitates 'black accent'], "*hayibo* [Zulu exclamation indicating surprise], you don't say?" It's really hysterical, and I just find it so funny when Indians try to talk like**

**the black people, and black people try to talk like the whites – just be yourself, don't talk like you're not.**

In Devasha's interpretation, it is desirable to listen to the music of other groups in South Africa in order to learn about them and establish grounds for communication, as long as it remains clear what group the music represents. However, speaking in the accent of another group is interpreted as 'not being one's self', and as being inauthentic, and is ridiculed. For Devasha, actively exposing oneself to the cultural manifestations of diversity is necessary in order to construct a new South African identity, but the appropriation of markers of another group as one's own threatens the categories constitutive of such diversity in the first place.

Anne provides a final example of responding to the tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity through music. However, she rejected the validity of attempts to organise homogeneity within the boundaries of nation states, insisting that common ground may exist between people regardless of national identity. In her words,

**I think nationalism's pretty shit anyway. I think it's just there to divide and put difference between you and other people... it's a way to look for difference instead of sameness with other people, across borders...I think we've had enough of that.**

By consciously seeking out the music of people from other nations and other cultures, she is able to imagine an inclusive identity in opposition to one based on differences imposed by ethnic or national boundaries.

**If you are listening to...international music it shows that you're open not only to your own culture, or your own national music, but you're also open to music from other places, cultures.**

Once again, music is appropriated as a means of negotiating constructions of heterogeneity and homogeneity.

Born suggests that there are two types of musical imaginary: one that attempts to mark difference, and one that attempts to merge with a dominant collectivity (1993: 282). This chapter has attempted to illustrate the complex ways in which imagining difference and

sameness through music may allow individuals to construct 'South Africa' as a nation. In all of these ways, individual listeners were able to negotiate their place in relation to national boundaries. Music allowed them to imagine possibilities for a South African identity, and to explore the layers of their identity as individuals within its borders. Certain research participants discussed in this chapter, such as Nosipho and Devasha, saw music as having a potential role for tracking changed identities in South Africa, or for enabling new ways of thinking about being South African. I will now take this discussion a step further by exploring in greater detail how interviewees understood the role of music in transforming old identities, and actualising new ones.

# Chapter 7:
# The Role of Music in Social Change in South Africa

One of the issues that was of the greatest interest to me in this research project was the extent to which music could be involved in processes of social change. In the interviews, I attempted to draw out the subjective perceptions of the research participants on this issue. From their responses, it became clear that in order to understand perceptions of the role of music in social change, various beliefs and opinions about the relationship between society and the individual had to be examined. I will begin this chapter with a discussion of these beliefs. I will follow this discussion with an analysis of these perceptions, demonstrating how they may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which individuals conceptualise the role of music in social change. Finally, I will show how an analysis of these perceptions may allow us to expand on and complexify some current academic theories of the role of music in social change by factoring in the agency of individuals.

## 'Folk theories' of social structure and individual agency

David Rubinstein (2001: 128) discusses how in society one may find a variety of commonly held ideas about the nature and workings of social life. He argues that individuals often refer to these 'folk theories' to make sense of their own behaviour and to justify their choices. In the interviews, two such 'folk theories' of the relationship between social structure and individual agency in determining music-listening practices could be found – the first gave primacy to social structure[19], while the second privileged individual agency. These 'folk theories' were revealed through an analysis of two aspects of the interviews: firstly, explanations given for racial division in music tastes; and

[19] Rubinstein defines social structure as factors determining the array of opportunities open to a particular individual (2001: 21). Following this definition, I include any variable that research participants felt constrained their behaviour and/or choices as forming part of social structure. Whether or not these variables did in fact limit the choices of research participants is irrelevant to this discussion, as I am exploring how individuals made sense of their actions to themselves. (For an analysis of the mutually constitutive relationship between social structure, cultural values, and individual agency, see Rubinstein 2001.)

secondly, interpretations of the significance of exceptions to the 'rules' of the listening preferences of racial groups in South Africa. It is necessary to examine these contrasting views in order to lay the foundation for an analysis of differing understandings of the role of music in social change.

A 'folk theory' privileging social structure in the determination of individual behaviour underpinned two approaches to explaining racial division in music taste. The first approach took the following form of reasoning: the backgrounds of people from different racial groups in South Africa are different; background determines one's musical tastes; therefore taste in music differs according to racial group. As I discussed earlier, Khaya applied this logic in his discussion of the determining role of the music heard during one's formative years in shaping one's musical preferences as an adult. He felt that the experience of an individual in South Africa, including the music s/he is exposed to during childhood and adolescence, is determined to a large extent by his or her racial classification. He also felt that one's class position is important in shaping one's tastes. He remarked that socio-economic status influences "what kind of people we become, because it chooses what options we have sometimes, beyond our own control." He provided the example of one's class position influencing the area in which one lives and thus the music one hears (see page 20), as well as influencing whether or not one can afford to go to clubs or buy CDs. Khaya felt that once an individual reaches adulthood, her or his tastes have become entrenched to such a degree that the possibility for significant change is almost non-existent.

Andile agreed with this interpretation. She elaborated that one will always feel an affinity for the music one grew up listening to, and that the effects of being socialised into regarding 'other people's music' (in her case 'white music') as inferior and not worth listening to are difficult to erase:

**I can try to listen to metal, but there's still that [idea that] this is heavy, and I can't listen to it...now I realise that I can be open, because for the longest time I would never have dreamed of listening to rock music, it was white music, and it was noise, and I was not going there. And that is purely because I'm South African, I'm from Umlazi where I lived on R&B and house and kwaito. Even now, as much as I'm**

**open minded, when I hear an R&B song, because that's my childhood, it's the first music that I know...I've still got that, you know, those memories there, and that sort of thing. So I'm trying to be very open minded about music, but [about] some things I just can't be, you know.**

Research participants who took this approach to explaining racial division in music taste displayed different degrees of rigidity in their opinions regarding the possibility of changing one's tastes once one has reached adulthood. Some mentioned various friends or acquaintances who had gone against the tastes of their background, as evidence that music preference is not determined entirely by environment. However, regardless of the flexibility attributed to musical tastes later in life, for all of these research participants, the primary causal factor in the division of music preferences along racial lines in South Africa was understood as being the experience of a racialised environment while growing up.

The second explanation for racial division in music preferences that attributed primacy to social structure focused on a perceived link between 'race' and lifestyle. Research participants who advanced this explanation felt that one's racial classification shapes one's culture or 'way of life', making individuals of a particular 'race' more likely to choose to listen to certain kinds of music rather than others. However, their understanding of the causal relationship between 'race' and lifestyle or culture was not always clear.

For example, Leon struggled to explain racialised music preferences, introducing notions of a shared spiritual 'essence' or a common 'mindset' within a racial group as possible contributing factors. He finally settled on the explanation outlined above, in which one's 'race' shapes one's lifestyle, and thus indirectly one's taste in music. After remarking that most popular music styles are derived from music made by black people, he commented that

**it's easy for coloured people and black people to relate to that stuff, because it's made by people of that same race, you know what I'm saying, so there's that connection...I'm saying you'll feel it, because, I don't know, maybe it's like a spiritual thing, because it doesn't start off like that, because music is music, but**

**people relate to certain music. I don't think a coloured person will go to the shops and say, hey, it's a coloured guy on the cover, I'm going to buy his stuff. Because if they feel it's shit they feel it's shit, they won't listen to it, you know, it's something else that you relate to.**

**MR: What do you think that is?**

**Leon: I don't know, I think maybe it's a type of thinking, you know what I'm saying, 'cause, OK, I know now from the experiences I've had...like the way people have a good time, most coloured and black people, they like dancing, seriously, they can dance, and they like doing it, but if you go out to like a white party it's people like mainly talking and socialising with each other, you know what I'm saying... so you see the music that you play will be able to fit in with what you actually like doing most of the time.**

In this interpretation, 'race' shapes what one prefers to do while socialising, and different music is chosen according to these preferences. However, Leon acknowledged that sometimes people choose to listen to music other than the styles prescribed by the norms of their racial group. He explained this in terms of a certain lifestyle suiting some individuals better than others. He elaborated that when blacks and coloureds choose to listen to 'white music' it is generally a consequence of their choosing a 'white lifestyle', as this better suits their personalities. Leon did not fully explain his opinion that the personalities of most black people are congruent with a 'black lifestyle'. At this point in the interview, it was not clear whether this belief was rooted in biologically essentialist beliefs about 'race', or in an understanding of racial groups as socialised into enjoying different things. However, Leon repeatedly emphasised later in the interview that there are a few individuals who listen to music not prescribed by their racial identity. This suggests a conceptualisation of 'race' less rigid than one informed by bio-culturalist beliefs, despite his references quoted above to a shared racial spirit or mode of thought.

Emcy's interview revealed similar contradictions. On the one hand, some of her comments suggest a view that regards as natural and axiomatic the existence of 'race' as a determinant of difference. On the other hand, she went to great lengths to emphasise that one should not judge a person's tastes according to his or her 'race', as many exceptions exist to the 'rules' of the music preferences of racial groups. She struggled to explain racial division in music tastes in a way that would not put her at risk of sounding,

in her words, "racist". She felt that the racial labelling of music could prompt such an accusation. At one point, she justified her use of racial labels when describing music by pointing out that a division of music taste according to 'race' is a reality in South Africa, and that using racial labels when speaking about music is a consequence of this. Again, her tendency to collapse the categories of 'race' and culture was evident – she explained that the division of music preferences along racial lines is merely the result of cultural differences still present between racial groups. In this interpretation, members of a certain 'race' listen to a particular type of music because it is the most compatible with the practices that make up their culture:

**[Black people] actually call it 'white music', and we call it 'black music', and then people say, oh, you're being a racist. But you're not. You're not. It's just, um...connected to culture, it's like connected to what the majority listen to. Like the majority of black people do listen to gospel, kwaito, R&B, rap, it's a fact, you speak to them, you can ask them, and they'll tell you, oh, that's white people's music, I don't like that. People have different cultures, and they should to be allowed to express themselves in different cultures, they should be allowed to have a choice and say, I don't like that music, I'm not going to listen to it. Because it might not suit their culture.**

In a similar way to Leon, Emcy never clarified her understanding of the processes through which 'race' shapes culture. At times, she protested against essentialised interpretations of 'race', and explained that one must be open to the possibility of individual exceptions to the norm of the racial group. However, in her explanations of how 'black culture' may favour certain music genres, it is clear that her opinions have been fed by western stereotypes linking 'black music' to images of nature and the body, constructed in opposition to the 'white' realms of culture and the mind:

**They [blacks] maybe like stuff that's more 'beaty', earthy...they maybe experience music differently, see music differently, they might have grown up in different cultures, different backgrounds. They might feel that it speaks to them better. They connect better to that. So I think it's more a cultural thing than a racial thing, but that's just labelling.**

Regardless of the contradictions between an interpretation of 'race' that leans towards the bio-cultural, and one in which racial difference is primarily a result of socialisation (evident in her comment that people have "grown up" in different cultures), Emcy's

interpretation attributes primacy to racial classification and racialised culture over individual agency in determining taste in music.

The third approach to explaining racial division in music taste in South Africa was underpinned by a 'folk theory' privileging individual agency in the determination of individual behaviour. Those who adopted this approach took the following line of reasoning: Individuals have a degree of freedom in choosing which group of people they identify with; in South Africa, individuals often identify with a group defined in terms of a shared racial classification; particular styles of music have associations with certain racial groups; therefore choosing one's music is a way of expressing one's chosen social identification. Research participants who interpreted the dynamics of society in this way generally acknowledged that growing up in an environment in which one is surrounded primarily by people of a similar racial classification, and in which certain genres of music are heard and not others, contributes to the racial labelling of these genres. However, they underlined the point that an individual is always free to choose a different identity from the one into which they were born and socialised, and to change their taste in music to reflect that new identity.

Some of these individuals qualified this belief with the observation that the majority of South Africans do not view the situation in this way, and do not realise that they have a choice as to the music they prefer. In this interpretation, the 'masses' may believe that they listen to what they like, but in fact, they listen to what they are expected to listen to. In this way, an elitist division was carved out separating those who listen to music because of what their social or racial group listens to, and those who choose music based on personal aesthetic criteria. Although attempting to divorce aesthetic evaluations from social identities is problematic (see pages 86-91), conceiving of the formation of music taste in this way allowed research participants such as Linda to explain racial division in music preferences. As I discussed earlier, Linda believed that people in South Africa assume that others who look similar to them, and thus who share their racial classification, must be like them on some deeper level. To affirm this deeper connection,

these individuals adopt practices shared by others of the same 'race', including music-listening habits.

Anne provides an example of a research participant who expressed a more optimistic view of the potential for individuals to affirm or alter their social identity through music, and did not imagine the majority of South Africans to be mindless drones, unquestioningly following the norms of social and racial groups. Her focus on an individual's freedom to choose both her identity and music is illustrated in the following remark:

**Music is part of identity, so the music you listen to reflects your identity. So based on how you see yourself, that's the music you'll listen to. So you can make stereotypes or generalisations, saying if you are born here and are subject to such and such type of music, because of your parents and the time that you were born and the place you were born, then you'll most likely listen to this...[but] you might all of a sudden, you might meet someone, and your whole [taste in] music can change because you've decided that, so you've reinvented your own identity. So depending on how you see yourself, that [taste in music] can change.**

Despite her acknowledgment of the fluidity of identity, Anne felt that in contemporary South Africa, most people do not identify with a national identity that encompasses their racial identity, and so their music-listening choices often tend to reaffirm old racial classifications, which is why music tastes remain divided along racial lines. David S. agreed with this interpretation, expressing the opinion that at present, most South Africans identify with others of the same racial group. Like Anne and Linda, he felt that music could symbolically affirm this identification. In response to my question as to what reasons he perceives for racial division in music taste in South Africa, he responded:

**I just think that...it's like, people like to be able to say what they are and what their preferences are, I think, and so generally, the few [coloured] people that I used to hang out with, they would never be caught be dead listening to rock 'n' roll...And in the groups and cliques that they're with they need to be able to connect with other people, so-and-so down the road, who's also a coloured *okie* [Afrikaans-derived slang for young man], will have this CD, so there's that connection. Like if you come in with something that's totally way out there, it would be like, hey, what's up, you don't fit in with a certain image...and some people are just like that, they are able to break the mould and they are able to come and make inroads, but the majority of people will just go with the flow and go with the whole.**

It is clear from the above comments that these research participants did not conceive of individual listeners as making choices entirely unfettered by social expectations. All three approaches to explaining racial division in music taste saw social structure and individual choice as being mutually involved in shaping individual behaviour and identity. However, those who adopted the first two approaches saw social factors beyond the control of the individual as generally overriding individual choice.

This contrast in interpretation was also manifested in discussions of the significance of individuals whose tastes diverge from the norms of their racial group[20]. For those who felt background and environment were the most important factors in determining taste in music, exceptions to the norm were explained in one of two ways: either as evidence for the increasing convergence of the experiences of racial groups in South Africa, in which the loosening of ties between 'race' and music was incorporated into a narrative of social transformation; or as the result of the exceptional background of the individual listener, whose experiences were seen as being unrepresentative of the racial group as a whole. Khaya explained his own listening preferences in terms of this latter interpretation, citing his unusual background as the reason his tastes are different from most other black South Africans. Chris and Zee offered a more idealistic reading of exceptions to the listening norms of racial groups. In his interview, Chris remarked that he had noticed a change in the racial composition of the audiences at rock performances at the club 'Burn'. I asked him how he would explain this change and he responded:

**I think it's just the generation that's coming through now. Like my generation [is] the generation just after schools got mixed, so [just after] they were mixed, everyone was still kind of segregated in their schools, and there was a bit of tension. But now...there's no borderlines anymore, no one really cares, it's all forgotten. I think we're brought up differently.**

In this way, changing listening habits in music are taken to be evidence for increased racial integration in other spheres of life. In fact, Chris used his experiences at 'Burn' as a means to dismiss claims concerning the continued existence in South Africa of racially

[20] Only Leon and Emcy did not attribute any significance to such exceptions. As I have already mentioned, they both emphasised that exceptions exist, but could not explain their belief that most individuals conform to the expectations of society, while a few do not.

defined norms of music tastes, as I discussed in Chapter 2. Zee also interpreted his observations of the increasing diversity of taste in music among his black friends as evidence of the 'fading away' of racial stereotypes in South Africa, and of the development of a national identity focused around the discourse of mixture. In response to my question as to whether he feels there are stereotypical ideas in South Africa regarding the listening preferences of racial groups, he responded:

**Zee: I think some stereotypes do influence [us], but now I think they're starting to fade away.**

**MR: What gives you that impression?**

**Zee: Well, I have a [black] friend who likes rock music now, and metal. Because I would never listen to metal any day... They [some of his other black friends] also don't like the music I listen to...I don't think the music you like is still about colour...I think we are in a stage in South Africa where we're not trying to classify ourselves into a certain group. Because now everything is just mixed.**

On the other hand, for those who felt that an individual's perception of his or her own identity plays the most important role in determining his or her music preferences, exceptions to the racial 'rules' of listening were interpreted as evidence of individuals adopting an 'open minded' attitude to identity, and opposing social pressures to conform to group norms. These exceptions were not viewed as constituting evidence for increased racial integration in South African society. Often, those who chose to interpret anomalies in this way were themselves exceptions to the social norm. They often used this interpretation to support a perception of themselves as enlightened individuals; the diametric opposite of the unthinking masses. Linda, Colin, and Jamiel all constitute examples of this view. I have already discussed at length Linda's opinions on the 'racial dupes' she believed the majority of South Africans to be. In her view, a minority of individuals manage to see through social mythologies naturalising the link between group identity and music, and to discover the truth about having a choice as to what music they prefer. Thus, in Linda's interpretation, exceptions to the music-listening norms of 'races' do not stem from an increased convergence of the experiences of racial groups in South Africa, and do not lead to the erosion of racial and social boundaries. For Linda, music may provide a temporary point of commonality between open-minded individuals in

contexts such as live performances. However, she views the potential for this common ground to lead to changed dominant social structures as being undermined by the majority of 'racially duped' South African listeners, who interpret exceptions to the norm as exceptional precisely to maintain their security in the fiction of the natural link between music and social group. In her words:

**Although maybe music is kind of like an integrating factor, it can bring people together, but there's also still just like [the attitude of], oh there's that white guy who listens to hip hop, or that black girl who listens to rock.**

Colin provided a similar interpretation of exceptions to the norm being the result of individual personalities rather than changing attitudes among South Africans as a whole. He described his experience in a Sociology lecture in which various students played the music they enjoyed. He noted that most white students reacted indifferently to kwaito, but that he enjoyed it. I asked him why this was and he replied that he makes a conscious effort to be open to different types of music. He added that:

**It's just my personality really. If you're open to change, and also it depends on if you're a dynamic diverse person who's willing to see new paths and stuff, [who's] adventurous.**

Along similar lines, Jamiel explained that most South Africans do not formulate their music preferences based on their own individuality, but because of social expectations. On the other hand, he perceived himself as someone who chooses music that appeals to him personally because of his identity as a 'free spirit'. Once again, exceptions to the norms of racial groups are attributed to individual personality rather than general social change.

These two alternate ways of weighting the relative causal influence of social structure and individual agency in forming listening preferences have implications for understanding ways in which research participants conceptualised the potential role of music in social change. Before I move on to this issue, however, I would like to point out that the oppositions I have discussed above must be understood not necessarily as fixed positions, but as potential resources for listeners to utilise in different contexts of

identification. This is especially clear when considering certain research participants who switched between various 'folk theories' of the relationship between social structure and agency at different points in the interview. For example, I have shown how, in some comments, Leon described one's 'way of life' – in his view, determined largely by one's racial classification – as dictating the music one will prefer. However, in Chapter 4 I discussed how Leon resisted possible attempts to attribute his own musical tastes to his 'race'. Nosipho provides a further example of how the same individual may attribute varying degrees of importance to social environment and individual choice in different contexts. In my view, Nosipho displayed some of the greatest insight into the fluid nature of social identity, and resisted various socially reductive explanations of behaviour. However, she felt that there was some music – what she called "cultural music" – that one would struggle to appreciate if one had not grown up listening to it:

**There's some music that you...are grown up into, and you can enjoy because your family or whatever would listen to it...just to use an example, like Afrikaans music, like 'sokkie' music [a type of Afrikaans dance music] and things like that, it's like if you have not grown up listening to that kind of music, it's very difficult for you to enjoy it, if you haven't been exposed to it.**

In this context, socialisation is viewed as playing a greater role than individual choice in enabling the enjoyment of a particular music.

It seems that these two 'folk theories' may best by understood as existing along a continuum, allowing individuals to interpret the relationship between social structure and individual choice as determining music preference in various ways, ranging from social environment determining music taste at one end to individual choice determining music taste at the other.

## Perceptions of the relationship between music and social change

The opposite poles of the continuum discussed above may each be paired with a contrasting interpretation of the role of music in social change. For those who saw social structure as the most important factor in determining music preferences, changing

listening practices could serve as an index of change in social environment. Also, these research participants viewed changes in the musical elements of the environment in which individuals are socialised as potentially contributing to changing patterns in the listening preferences of racial groups. However, in this interpretation, once an individual reaches adulthood their tastes are relatively fixed, and music may play little part in precipitating social change. For those who privileged individual choice in determining music taste, changing one's taste in music could reflect a changed self-perception, and/or allow listeners to establish common ground with others on which interpersonal relationships could be built. At this point, it is possible to demonstrate these varying interpretations of the relationship between music and social transformation. The perceptions of research participants were revealed in relation to discussion of four areas of musical activity: radio; communal experiences of music, such as live performances; 'mixed' or hybrid forms of music; and shared taste in music among individuals.

**The role of radio**

For many of those research participants who privileged social environment in determining individual listening practices, the potential of radio to affect social change was considered significant. These interviewees felt that radio constitutes an important part of the environment in which individuals are socialised, and in which the roots of racial division in music taste are anchored. The radio station that one's parents listened to during one's childhood, and the station preferred by older siblings and friends and relatives were all discussed as examples of the important place of radio in the musical backdrop of one's formative years. In Chapter 2, I have discussed in more detail some of the opinions about the racial targeting of radio stations reinforcing the listening norms of racial groups. For individuals who emphasised the importance of radio, a diversification of the music played by each station was interpreted as contributing to breaking down stereotypes of racially labelled music. They felt that this could contribute to creating a situation in South Africa in which tastes are more mixed, and less divided along racial lines.

For example, Shashi felt that the more inclusive playlist of 5FM has contributed to a breaking down of the rigid racial labelling of rock and kwaito. In her words:

**I don't know so much anymore about kwaito equals black, rock equals white. When 5FM was overhauled they started to play a lot of mainstream or 'pop' kwaito, which seems to have 'opened the airwaves' a bit.**

Another research participant, Prince, attributed the changes in the buying practices of racial groups that he has observed working at Musica to individuals "hearing the music on the radio". He didn't explicitly relate this to changing playlists of radio stations, but the claim that racial buying practices have changed because of what people have heard on the radio implies either that people are listening to different radio stations, or that the range of music they hear on their preferred radio station has changed. Judging from other comments that Prince made in which he seemed to view the role of the individual as essentially being that of passive receiver of social listening norms, it seems likely that he intended the latter meaning.

Some research participants agreed that radio could contribute to breaking down racial division in listening preferences, but also felt that increasingly mixed playlists are an indicator of increased racial integration in South African society. For example, Amanda observed that the playlists of radio stations in South Africa are becoming more mixed. She felt that this mixing has exposed her to unfamiliar music genres, and has contributed to her becoming more accepting of this music. However, she qualified this opinion with the remark that radio stations are still "quite segmented", but that as "all these things start to change", the range of music played on all radio stations will become increasingly diverse. In this interpretation, radio stations are viewed as both influencing and reflecting societal dynamics.

**Amanda: [5FM] has also been playing stuff that I never thought they'd play...Firstly, before Mandoza, which is not that long ago, kwaito wouldn't be played on the radio...bhangra, you find more Indian bhangra things are becoming popular on stations like 5FM as well, which are aimed more at the youth culture, whereas you'd expect that to kind of stay on Lotus FM. And on Metro, you'll sometimes hear South African rock more type music as well. [...] So I think [radio**

**stations] are still quite segmented, but as all these things start to change, and the stereotypes break down as well, I think it will open up to a lot more people.**

Generally, research participants who felt that radio could contribute to eroding racial division in music taste did not interpret this change as leading to other sorts of social change. However, Nosipho made an interesting observation about the potential connection between the diversification of the music played on radio stations, and the discovery of points of convergence between South Africans of different racial groups. She described an experience in which she was listening to a discussion on Metro about hair extensions, and various black men phoned in to criticise black women who wear them as not being 'African'. Following these callers, a white female caller pointed out that in her opinion, hair extensions had nothing to do with being African or not, and everything to do with practicality and comfort. Nosipho recalled her pleasure and surprise that a white woman had expressed her very thoughts on the subject. She concluded that if radio stations could continue to diversify their playlists to encourage the formation of racially diverse audiences, more of this sort of intercultural and interracial dialogue could be facilitated.

In summary, research participants perceived various possible roles for radio in processes of social change: as a potential means to break down stereotypes linking music genre to racial group, as an index for transformation and racial integration in South Africa, and as potentially shared space in which intercultural and interracial dialogue could take place.

**The communal experience of music and imagining social change**

In response to my question as to whether research participants had experienced music as a force for integration in South Africa, the shared physical space of the concert or club was often mentioned. However, although research participants understood performances as sites where new modes of interracial association could be imagined, and where preconceived notions of racialised listening practices could be challenged, most of them felt that these experiences could not translate into increased integration in other realms of social life.

For example, George drew a contrast between the type of social interaction possible at a music performance, and relations in every day life. He commented that:

**...last year at the [Cape Town] North Sea Jazz Festival I saw whites, coloureds, blacks and Indians interact so much as a group, to such a large extent, to a greater extent than I've ever seen people communicate with each other openly in a normal social context...I think it's because music stimulates emotion, and people have a very personal relationship with the music that they listen to. When they see other people with a personal relationship with the music, class and race difference disappears, because it's a personal relationship, and if another person has a personal relationship with something, you forget about who they are and what they do. All that's important is that they share a very personal relationship that you have, with you... Unfortunately when people aren't in that common music-listening environment, they won't necessarily get together.**

Nosipho also highlighted the disjuncture between the everyday and the alternate space of the communal listening context. She began by describing the highly segregated environment she had experienced at Pretoria University, which she attended prior to transferring to the University of KwaZulu-Natal:

**Pretoria University – I find the atmosphere, I don't know the word for it. There's a big distinction between – it's not just black, white, Indian, you know. It's English-speaking, Afrikaans-speaking, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, you know, there's like such a division, you really see the effects of apartheid in Pretoria, you really feel it.**

However, she contrasted these everyday experiences with the space of the concerts during Rag Week, in which the primary lens through which people viewed each other was not racial or cultural, but focused rather on the shared aural and physical pleasure of experiencing the music.

**But when we were at that concert it was kind of like the boundaries were down a bit, you know, we were all enjoying the same music, we were all, you know, together, and, you know, there wasn't that tension that was there before for other things [in Rag week]...You know when you're at a concert and you're out with friends, you're not thinking about, ag man, this music, Afrikaans music. You're just like there to have fun and dance and whatever, and, that's it, you know. Who you dance with, or whatever, it's cool, it's just fine. And then all of a sudden when you're out of that atmosphere, I don't know what it is about it, but you all of a sudden become aware of your culture, of whatever. Because I mean, other Rag things that I attended, street collecting, things like that, it was so terrible because the black students were treated so badly by the Afrikaans-speaking students. They would, you know, swear**

**at us and say things like, "you shouldn't be here, this is for Afrikaans people, this is an Afrikaans university"...But then for that concert, it was just like, I didn't even notice, there wasn't even, you know, this band is white, it was just like, we were at a concert, and we were all just having fun.**

When I asked her whether she felt that those alternative ways of relating to one another in the context of the concert could precipitate changed ways of relating in everyday life, she responded in the negative:

**I'm very doubtful. I think it has to do with the generation that you grow up in. I look at my [younger] sisters...there was no remnants of apartheid in them. With me [when I was growing up], it was still kind of going away, fading away, so I was still kind of there when there were marches or whatever even though I didn't really understand exactly what was going on...For us, I think, there will always be that thing there.**

As I have already mentioned, Nosipho was ambivalent about the importance of individual choice in determining music taste. Her position on the degree of choice an individual has regarding their own identity also fluctuated between one in which identities are viewed as fluid constructions, and one in which social structure is believed to ultimately constrain an individual's options. In this comment quoted above, she leans towards the latter position. Her interpretation here is that once one has formed an impression of who one is and the behaviour appropriate to that identity, one may not excise that from one's consciousness. Musical experiences may allow individuals to imagine and partially experience other ways of being, but cannot undo the ultimately determinative effects of socialisation.

Natasha expressed a similar scepticism regarding the potential for integration experienced at concerts to provide a catalyst for change in other areas of social life. However, rather than focussing on social environment while growing up as the reason for this, she highlighted the importance of macro-political structures. She felt that although individuals may choose their music according to their own preferences and form interpersonal affiliations on this basis, macro structures play the greatest role in shaping social division and integration. This is evident in the following exchange:

**MR: Do you think this racial mixing at rock concerts can affect the way different 'races' relate to each other in real life?**

**Natasha: I think you can process the experience of the live concert. I'll always know that, hey, I saw that guy from campus or something, it will live with me whenever I hear the song. But sometimes bureaucratic nonsense gets in the way, like, you can have the experience, and it can affect you, but it doesn't mean it's going to affect other people. The hierarchy, the overarching structures of the way stuff works.**

**MR: So that's really the problem, would you say, the structures?**

**Natasha: I still think there's a gap there, again, between what it has to be, and what it is.**

**MR: Do you think [experiences at concerts] can change certain mindsets?**

**Natasha: Ya, it can change people's mindsets, but we don't know whether the decision makers are going to change their mindsets. Who knows if Thabo Mbeki listens to rock music?**

It is clear that Natasha envisions a role both for the choices of individuals and the social environment in shaping society. In her comments there is a tension between structures maintaining social division, and individual 'decision makers' having the potential to change their 'mindsets' and thus alter such structures. The implication in the last sentence is that choosing to listen to rock music could be part of a decision maker changing his 'mindset'. Thus in Natasha's understanding of society, structure and agency exist in a dialectic relationship to one another. The place where music may enter into processes of social change is at the individual level, as part of someone's choice to alter their 'mindset'.

Similarly to Natasha and Nosipho, Shashi expressed doubts concerning the potential for shared musical contexts to transform interracial relations in others areas of life. However, she did not justify this opinion in terms of the fixed nature of identities through socialisation, or through the impotence of individual will in the face of larger social forces. She focused on the insufficiency of the euphoria during communal experiences of music performances to bring about the mutual understanding and personal commitment to integration she felt was necessary for social change. In her words,

**I think music is a very powerful healer and connector, and I think in a mass situation it can bring people together tremendously, eg. the 46664 concert[21]. What I worry about is when the music euphoria dies down, what have we really learnt about each other, and are we ready to really commit to everyday integration? I'd like to think it helps a little but I don't know.**

Underlying this remark is a view of social change driven by individual choices; choices to engage in communication, choices to embrace integration. An individual who explicitly discussed the role of individual choice in effecting general social change was Anne. Unlike Shashi, Anne felt that the shared physical space of a performance environment could provide a resource for individual efforts to transform their identities and allow for new modes of social interaction to come into being. She began by criticising 'top down' attempts to manufacture a unified national identity. She felt in order to be experienced as real, changed identities had to come from individuals making an effort not to insulate themselves within their own culture, but to find out about the culture and lives of other South Africans. This became clear in her response to my question as to whether she feels there is any identity that is shared by South Africans:

**[The government] is trying. I don't know how genuine it is. I mean nationalism's always constructed. You could ask the same about another place...[but] I think we're still very divided...I think, musically, like the national anthem, that's also very constructed. But most people don't know how to sing it, really. How many people know how to sing the Zulu? They know their different parts, but they don't really know how to sing the whole thing...I think if it [the development of a shared national culture] could happen naturally, not naturally like people sitting back and carrying on doing the same old thing, people need to make an effort to go out and try and learn about other people. To go to Indian weddings, to go...to different places where there are mixed [people], where there are mixed musics and try take an interest. It's on an individual level, by them stuffing it down our throat it isn't good.**

In this interpretation, environments in which music is shared communally by a variety of people from different backgrounds allow individuals to expose themselves to difference and to actively contribute to creating new shared identities in South Africa. She provided an example of her own experience of the transformative potential of collective musical environments. She described going to a Congolese nightclub:

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[21] A concert involving various local and international bands held to raise money for HIV/AIDS, organised by a charity affiliated to Nelson Mandela.

**I went not so long ago to a night club in Point Road...And it was such nice music from Zaire, like kwasa kwasa...And it was nice, everyone dancing together, and I bumped into one of the car guards I see on a regular basis, and they've never forgotten it, hey. Every time I go to the Pavillion [mall] they're all waiting, and trying to find a parking for me, and everyone's so open and friendly. Maybe it was also my going there, but it was also us dancing together to the same music and my showing interest in them, you know, because they have a big population here, all refugees, and no one gives them any attention or really accepts them.**

For Anne, shared musical environments provide spaces where individuals may publicly affirm their commitment to learning about other people, and where existing social relationships may be altered.

In summary, communal experiences of music were interpreted by most research participants as allowing for the imagining of new modes of relating to other South Africans, but as inadequate for precipitating change in other spheres of life. This was either explained in terms of immutable difference as a result of prior socialisation, of the inadequacy of individual will in the face of macro social structures, or of the absence of individual commitment to negotiating integration in everyday life. However, contexts of communal musical experience were interpreted by Anne as places where a commitment to integration and openness could be publicly performed, and where such a demonstration could lead to new ways of relating to others who have shared the musical experience.

**'Mixed' music and social change**

Opinions about the potential for hybrid styles of popular music to bring about changed social identities differed. One reservation frequently expressed about 'mixed' music was that it may do more to polarise different groups in South Africa than to establish common ground between them. Research participants who held this opinion felt that music based on the mixture of various musical elements could be interpreted as constituting 'theft' by those who felt that an element within the mixture 'belonged' to them.

Natasha expressed this belief in very strong terms. She felt specifically that pop music that incorporates aspects of Indian styles is simply an exploitative attempt to make money and to 'capture the market'. In relation to this she commented:

**I don't like that. I mean, I like the songs, but part of me doesn't like it because it's exploitation. They use our saris for curtains, you grow up with an appreciation for [the cultural associations of saris], and then for people just to use it to cover their windows, you think it's not right. And like our songs as well.**

Vumani agreed that 'mixed' music has the potential to create resentment, but that a sensitive approach could circumvent this possibility. Speaking specifically about the album *Coca Cola Collaboration*, on which artists from various racial groups came together to perform musically hybrid works, he commented that:

**[Collaborations won't work] as long as we still have the mindset that, oh no man...this is supposed to be a kwaito thing, and why are they introducing some white guys into it? Because black people can be very racist, as much as racism is associated with white people because of where South Africa comes from. But there's this apartheid in reverse, are you doing this to me because I'm black? We're sensitive. And if we could just get the right people to do these things for us. Because we do have some white people that we love, and I do believe that the white people in South Africa also have some black people that they love, other than Nelson Mandela. That they can say, I'm proud to be South African, because I'm related to this person, or these are my fellow country people who are doing something positive in the eyes of the world.**

Interestingly, he felt that a specific group of South Africans, defined by class position rather than 'race', are most likely to respond positively to such collaborative efforts. He made this observation in the context of criticising the marketing strategy of the TV show *Coca Cola Collaboration*, from which the CD was a spin-off. He felt that screening the program on SABC 1 was a mistake, as the audience of this channel is primarily poorer, less-educated South Africans. He felt that such an audience is likely to be more conservative and less open to change. In his words, "it doesn't help to try and sell these ideas to someone who's not literate or who's on a different wavelength in terms of thinking". However, Vumani did feel that if heard by the right people, such collaborations and the 'mixed' music resulting from them could foster an appreciation in listeners for previously unfamiliar music. In this view, socialisation and individual agency are mutually involved in both determining and changing racial division in music preferences. In Vumani's view, it is the level of education and the socio-economic environment in which an individual was raised that determines their receptiveness to

altering and expanding their tastes in music. Individual choice may potentially play a role, but a particular socialisation is necessary to actualise this potential.

Others felt that hybrid music styles could play a role in affecting change beyond diversifying the listening preferences of racial groups. This was conceptualised in various ways. Certain research participants expressed the belief that hybrid music may provide a resource for individual listeners attempting to relate to others. For example, David D. felt that mixed music could help those committed to establishing channels of communication with others from different racial groups, although he did not specify the processes through which this 'help' was given. However, he felt that without the prior individual will, music could not give rise to social change:

**MR: Do you think the mixing of music on radio stations, and different artists collaborating, do you think that can bring change in the way 'races' relate to each other in real life?**

**David: That would help, but at the end of the day, it starts with the individual. Do you want to change, do you want to work with so-and-so? If your mindset is not that, then music won't play a big part. It has to start with the person, [they have to decide] I want to talk to so-and-so, work together, give them a chance.**

In this interpretation, individual will is a necessary precondition for changed social interaction.

Other research participants such as David S. focused on the role of hybrid music in transforming identities. He felt that in various contexts, both social environment and individual choice could play a role in affecting change. In our interview, David expressed the opinion that music could provide a space in which individual musicians negotiate new relational understandings of each other, and in so doing, find common points of reference on which a shared identity could be based. He discussed this opinion in relation to his ideas concerning the creation of a shared 'South African music'. He spoke about the role of national musics in binding people together and remarked that such a music is at present absent in South Africa. I then asked him:

**How do you think that kind of national music develops?**

**David: Um...sometimes by chance, when I think of places where that does exist, there's like a strong tradition, and a strong sense of unity, that we can all identify. Like for example, if I think of South Africa and I think of a tree, and you think of South Africa and you think of a stone, the two don't fit together, and if we try to come together and create something it will sound totally [wrong], but if we kind of think of, OK, lets think of sand, you know stones and trees, something that links them. So I think it comes from people who kind of, maybe don't think exactly think the same, but there's a certain overlapping. Like I think if, let's say, a group of people from each different race got together and they all agreed on a certain sound that will appeal to everybody and they just create this music.**

In this view, music may both reflect established identities, and through individual interaction, may play a role in transforming them. However, David believed that in certain contexts, social environment could override individual choice in determining music taste and individual identity. This was made clear in the following comment concerning how collaborations between various South Africans may become entrenched as 'South African music':

**I think that over time it will grow on people, and I also think, as much as you hate to admit it, repetition...so even if people hate the [music], lets say the radio plays that certain type of music quite often, then people will just say, twenty years down the line, this is our music.**

In this interpretation, hearing a particular music often enough may cause people to accept the music as 'ours', where the 'our' refers to a newly emerged identity, without their making this choice at a conscious level.

Janine expressed a similar view of the dual role of individual choice and social environment in changing social identities. She felt that individuals could choose to be open to diverse styles of music, and learn about others through this choice. On the other hand, she also felt that alterations in one's musical environment could lead to social change beyond the control of the individual. She provided the example of 'mainstream' popular music that incorporates 'exotic' elements. She felt that this mixed music can slip social integration in 'through the back door', so to speak. As listeners hear the music again and again, the difference of the elements it contains is 'tamed', and acceptance of

the unfamiliar musical elements leads to an acceptance of the people with which the music is associated. In her words:

**A lot of bands are starting to incorporate drums and didgeridoos and things from diverse sources, and then people listening to the bands, start to [become familiar] with those sort of instruments. And slowly but surely you start to respect other cultures, because you enjoy it in *your* type of music, because it's an integrative [force]... And if you start to accept other people's music, you start to accept the person and the race as well.**

In this interpretation, an individual has agency in choosing the music they listen to, but does not have ultimate control over the effects of listening to that music on their attitudes and opinions.

In summary, some research participants were critical of hybrid music because they believed it could cause resentment in those who felt that aspects of the music 'belonged' to them, and should not be mixed and contaminated with the music of others. Others felt, if carried out sensitively and marketed to the right people, hybrid styles could contribute to generating an open attitude to unfamiliar music, and to blurring the mutually reinforcing boundaries of 'race' and taste in music. Others felt that hybrid music could alter patterns of social interaction, and transform identities. The conceptualisation of the role of music in this process varied from a view in which music could precipitate changed attitudes without the awareness or consent of the individual, to one in which the role of music was limited to that of a resource for individuals in their efforts to imagine themselves in a different way, and establish new social relationships.

**Music as a social tool of interpersonal relationships**

The greatest consensus about the potential for music to effect change was found in discussions of music as a means for establishing common ground between individuals in order to create or transform interpersonal relationships.

For interviewees such as Andile, to share a love of a particular music with someone else was to share an emotional affinity on which interpersonal communication could be based. She expressed this opinion in the following discussion:

**...music is one of those things that facilitate relations between people. You know if I found out that you also love jazz, then I immediately start thinking, OK, there's this something that I can relate to in you, because if you love this thing and I love it so much, then there has to be some commonality between us. So when that happens like with interracial [interaction]...people start going beyond just, "oh, you listen to this, you like that". They start knowing you better and you're no longer just a black dude. You love whatever artist you have in common. So that helps facilitate how people think about each other and how they relate to each other.**

In this way, the primary identification through which social interaction takes place is changed from that of two differently racialised individuals, to that of two jazz fans.

Anne also provides an example of how a shared taste in music may transform the terms of an interpersonal relationship. I asked her if she had experienced music as an integrating force, and she responded as follows:

**Ya. There's an example this morning, I was in the garden, and this guy came and asked for some lemons off the tree...this African guy. Just the way he spoke, I said you're different, you're not from here. He said no, he's from Mozambique. But because I go there a lot, I said you know, I listen to [inaudible], they're listened to in Mozambique because of the Portuguese connection...and the next thing he was running over and he has a CD [of the inaudible genre of music she has just mentioned], and I swapped it with my other CD, and we swapped it for the day. And in that way we became friends. It was just something we both liked. So it can be a way that...no longer was he the gardener who lives up the road and me the somebody who lives in the house.**

Music provided a way for Anne and the Mozambiquan to establish equals terms on which a friendship could be based, rather than on the uneven terms prescribed by his status as casual labourer and hers as suburban resident.

Natasha agreed that music could provide common ground between individuals, allowing conversations to be initiated. She felt that the artists one loves or hates can provide points

of entry into communication that extends beyond the superficiality of topics such as the weather.

**I think [music] is actually bringing us together, because many times I've had conversation about different types of rock music with different people, how much we hate Britney, that's like a theme...it gives us common ground. Because you can't talk about the weather for very long, and music's always changing, that's what we like, that's what we hate...like this guy in class was listening to a Stain'd CD on head phones loudly so we could hear it, and when he took the headphones off, we were like, that's a cool CD, and we started talking. So it brings you together, you can communicate via it.**

In his interpretation of the role of music in social integration, Zee focused on a shared taste in music as resulting from a shared emotional response to that music, determined by the identity and personality of the individual. He expressed the opinion that rather than marketing their music to a particular demographic in the population, artists in South Africa now decide that:

**"I'm just going to sing what I feel like, I'll do whatever I like", and then they put that out to the people who sort of share the same understanding, the same view of life or whatever... obviously some people are not going to feel what you're saying, some will, and then you're going to get your crowd.**

As I mentioned before, he felt that individual identity in South Africa is becoming increasingly loosened from racial and other social determinants, and so he believed that a shared love of music could occur between people of different racial groups, and could facilitate interracial mixing and communication.

**I don't think the music you like is still about colour. Definitely not. Because black, Indian people whatever, can come together and enjoy a certain kind of music now. So it doesn't really have to be about colour. Even though they don't understand the language which is being sung in, but who cares, it's the music that touches.**

In this way, barriers to communication experienced in other spheres of life, such as differing linguistic competencies, do not preclude a shared love of a certain music, and the 'coming together' it facilitates. Zee did not clarify whether this 'coming together' took the form of face-to-face interpersonal relationships, or was restricted to the realm of an imagined affinity for others sharing one's taste in music.

In summary, shared taste in music was interpreted by many research participants as having the potential to effect social change on an interpersonal level, by laying the foundation of common ground on which relationships could be built, or by providing a means through which the terms of the relationship could be changed.

**Expanding the analysis of perceptions of music and social change**

In this discussion, I have attempted to make clear how 'folk theories' of the role of individual choice in shaping music-listening practices inform perceptions of the relationship between music and social change in various ways. However, in order for this analysis to be expanded, these 'folk theories' of the origins of music taste need to be examined in conjunction with 'folk theories' of the dynamics of other social phenomena. Specifically, it is necessary to take into account various understandings of the capacity of individual agency to affect social change in general, as well as the varying degrees of independent causal power attributed to music in changing conventions of thought. I will attempt to illustrate the importance of this broader view in providing a holistic analysis of the perceptions of research participants.

The following example illustrates the interconnectedness of the various 'folk theories' held by an individual in shaping perceptions of the role of music in social change. If one believes that individual agency can play a role in overall social change, as transformed individual behaviour eventually adds up to a transformed society; and one believes that individuals have the freedom to choose their music, and that these choices can serve as a means for changing the way one relates to others; then it follows that one will conceptualise the role of music in social change as potentially significant. However, if one believes that social change is primarily 'top down', and that music preferences are determined more on an individual level than on a macro-social level, then it seems likely that one will view music as relatively unimportant in precipitating social change. Contrasting the opinions of Anne and Natasha provides an illustration of this point. Anne felt that an integrated national identity had to come from individuals making an effort to reach out to others in South Africa different from themselves. Music was one of the areas

in which she believed this could take place, as she believed individuals had the freedom to make inclusive rather than exclusive listening choices. For this reason, she felt that music could play an important role in social change and integration in South Africa. Similarly, Natasha felt that individuals could oppose music-listening norms by asserting their individuality and listening to music according to personal preference. However, she differed from Anne in her opinion that social division in South Africa had more to do with overall social structures than individual attitudes. So although music could allow individuals to alter their 'mindsets' and to initiate communication with others of different 'races', micro changes such as these could not precipitate integration on a mass scale, unless they allowed decision makers who were involved in the formulation of government policies to change their attitudes and opinions.

A further factor that is important to take into account in understanding perceptions of the role of music in social change is the degree of independent causal power attributed to music by research participants. For some, individuals could choose the music they listened to, but could not control entirely its effects on them. This opinion is illustrated by Janine. As I discussed above, she felt that people may choose to listen to popular music that incorporates 'exotic' elements, as it is in a form they are familiar with, performed by bands they already listen to. Regardless of the motivations of the individual listener, however, she felt that hearing this music repeatedly would inevitably bring about an acceptance of the unfamiliar idiom, and the people that idiom was believed to represent. On the other hand, there were those who disputed the independent power of music to change people's attitudes. For example, David D. believed that hybrid music could only bring about social integration if it was heard by a listener that was already committed to social transformation. In this latter view, music may be involved in causing social change through its utilisation by individuals, but may not function independently of human agency.

By examining beliefs about the relationship between individual and society, as well as understandings of the degree of conscious choice involved in affecting change through music, one may achieve greater insight into the underpinnings of research participants'

interpretations of the role of music in social change. Although this account is not exhaustive, I hope it contributes to providing a framework in which the relationship between individual listening practices and various 'folk theories' of individual agency and social structure may be analysed. Before addressing the issue of the possible contribution of the above discussion to contemporary theories of social change in multicultural societies, I wish to return to a distinction made by Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000), and the bearing of this distinction on the experiences of the interviewees: that of 'real' vs. 'imaginary' identities.

**'Real' vs. 'imaginary' musical identifications**

It is clear from the above discussion that research participants saw music as being involved in various processes of social transformation. Some discussed the role of music in altering identities, while others focused on the potential for music to enable new modes of social interaction. In understanding these various types of social change, it is useful to recall the distinction made by Born and Hesmondhalgh in their discussion of the musical imaginary, between musical identifications that are "*purely imaginary*...with no intent to actualise those identities" and an imaginary that "works to *prefigure,* crystallise or potentialize *real* forms of sociocultural identity" (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000: 35, italics in original). However, they do not elaborate on exactly how one may distinguish between a musical identification that exists primarily in the realm of the imagination, and one that may lead to new forms of 'real' sociocultural identities. The authors do mention the idea of 'intent', suggesting the listener's or composer's motive in imagining an other through music is relevant in defining the sort of musical identification taking place. Focusing on the intent of the listener or composer seems appropriate for understanding the formation of new imagined communities, based on a feeling of affinity with an anonymous body of people (Anderson; 1991). However, the question that may then be asked is, does such an imagined community constitute a changed 'real' sociocultural identity? How may one distinguish between a 'real' as opposed to a purely 'imaginary' identity, when all identifications are imaginary to some degree? (Hall 1996). Here it seems useful to contrast Anderson's imagined communities based on a private identification with

anonymous others, the majority of whom one will never meet, with Cohen's (1989) notion of symbolically constructed communities, in which shared symbols allow for face-to-face interaction among members.

For the research participants in this study, the musical imaginary played a role in the inception of both of these sorts of communities. It is clear that for some, the anonymous mass context of the communal experience of music at a concert, for example, allowed them to experience an imagined sense of community with all those present, regardless of differences that divided them in every day life. A good example of this is provided by George, who imagined the existence of a personal connection with the music, similar to the one he experienced, in each of the other audience members present at the jazz performances he attended. In this way, he could imagine a community united by the commonality of a shared emotional experience, considered more fundamental than differences of 'race' and class. Amanda expressed a similar opinion about the possibility of setting aside one's awareness of the existence of differences among the audience members for the duration of the shared experience of the pleasure of the music. In her words:

**You...go to a concert, and you kind of see everyone and...no matter who you are, what race you are, what job you do, how much money you earn, you're all having fun to the same thing. And for that fleeting moment, everyone's getting along.**

For both George and Amanda, however, these shared experiences do not feed off into changed ways of relating to one another in everyday life. In examples such as these, the changed identity is primarily imaginary.

For others, music clearly played a part in enabling new modes of social interaction, and thus new 'real' sociocultural identities, to come into being. For research participants such as Andile, Anne and Devasha, music provided the common ground on which new social relationships could be established, or on which existing ones could be transformed. In Cohen's (1989) analysis of the symbolic construction of community, he shows how members of a community imagine that all members of the community share their interpretation of the meaning of a particular symbol. Whether or not the symbol *is*

interpreted in a similar way by members is unimportant; it is the imagined commonality that serves as the source of social cohesion for the community. Andile's remarks, to which I have already referred above, illustrate how listeners may imagine music as a symbol whose meaning is shared by other members of the 'community' (in her example, the community of jazz lovers):

**You know if I found out that you also love jazz, then I immediately start thinking, OK, there's this something that I can relate to in you, because if you love this thing and I love it so much, then there has to be some commonality between us. So when that happens like with interracial [interaction]...people start going beyond just, "oh, you listen to this, you like that". They start knowing you better and you're no longer just a black dude. You love whatever artist you have in common. So that helps facilitate how people think about each other and how they relate to each other.**

In this interpretation, a love of the same music is imagined as symbolising for both parties a deeper personal affinity. That Andile projects her interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the shared love of a form of music onto others is clear in the seamless way in which she changes from first person to third person perspective ("then *I* immediately start thinking...", "*people* start going beyond...").

For Anne and Devasha, the role of the imagination was slightly different. These two did not imagine the shared symbolic meaning of music for themselves and for those with whom they were interacting. Rather, imagining themselves through their choice in music provided a means for the affirmation of their own identity as people open to and accepting of difference, who want to reach out to others in South Africa. Reinforcing this identity allowed them to interact with others around them in a way congruent with this self-perception. Anne explicitly interpreted her tastes in music as a means for expressing and affirming her identity. This is evident in the following exchange:

**MR: You were saying earlier that music is related to identity. How would you say that your musical tastes are related to your identity?**

**Anne: ...like if you're listening to African music, it shows that you're not racist. That's a simple one. Listening to music that's got both black and white performers could say that [you're committed to] integration, or that you're open to that kind of thing. If you're listening to...international music it shows that you're open not only**

**to your own culture, or your own national music, but you're also open to music from other places, cultures, you know.**

Similarly, Devasha's classification of herself as someone who is open to others different from herself – at one point in the interview she commented, "I'm a person that interacts with all different races" – is supported by her remarks concerning her interest in the music of others, and her ability to appreciate it. She described an experience in a Sociology lecture in which various students in the class played their favourite music:

**When I listened to the music, I found that...I didn't feel bored, and it wasn't agonising to sit there and listen to the music, because I understood the different types of music that people listen to...I like to listen to music, so I can understand what's going on in our lives. If I just didn't listen to [the music of] other groups...[I'm] not going to know what's going on.**

In conclusion, there were two ways in which the musical imaginary was involved in generating new forms of 'real' sociocultural identity – identities allowing face-to-face social interaction: in allowing listeners to imagine a shared symbolic meaning for the music among the parties involved in the interaction, and in enabling the imaginative affirmation of a personal identity focused around an attitude of openness to other South Africans, and a commitment to communicating with and learning from them.

## Connecting 'folk' interpretations to social theory

To end this discussion, I would like to put the perceptions of research participants discussed above into the broader context of social theories that address specifically the issue of changing identity in multicultural societies. This will allow for an assessment of how a micro-level study such as this may contribute to such theories.

Gerd Baumann's (1999) discussion of the processes that give rise to points of 'multicultural convergence' provides a useful starting point. For Baumann, living in a multicultural society brings about certain contexts in which individuals must interact with cultural 'others' in order to achieve their goals. In contexts such as these, "questioning and relativizing reified cultural boundaries" (Baumann 1999: 132) becomes a pragmatic

necessity for enabling this interaction. Baumann suggests that through repeated exchanges between people from different cultural backgrounds, points of multicultural convergence develop. He defines this convergence as "separate processes of cultural change pointing all in the same direction, but each taking a different path toward the same common point" (Baumann 1999: 126). He argues that these points of concurrence may originate in any of the constituent cultural groups, and do not necessarily have to be associated with the hegemonic majority. He provides the example of the adoption of the practice of invoking 'cousin bonds' among the male youth living in the multicultural context of Southall, London. These 'cousin bonds' are claims of filial connection, often fabricated, on which these young men rely to get themselves out of various sorts of trouble. Although this practice originated among the Sikhs, it is now found across the cultural spectrum of Southall male youth. Baumann stresses the need for further ethnographic studies to track how these processes of cultural convergence happen at a micro level.

Similarly, Duncan Brown (2001) highlights the need for such studies in the South African context. He discusses how the social sciences and humanities may contribute to nation building in South African through research and teaching focused on the relational and dialogical nature of cultures. He suggests by way of example the possibility of conducting research projects around a 'theme' on which the experience of various groups of South Africans converges. He argues that such an approach could promote "intercultural literacy", a term introduced by Miller, defined as "a mode of inquiry that respects the accumulation of shared symbols…but also invites research into the processes by which cultures constitute themselves by reference to each other" (Miller quoted in Brown 2001: 765). Quoting Michael Chapman, he emphasises that the goal of projects such as these would not be "to venture into other people's worlds and venture out again, but to engender semantic compatibility between distinctive language-cultural systems" (quoted in Brown 2001: 769). He believes that such studies could contribute to building national solidarity "not through the fictions of imagined unity, but through a shared problematic – a mutual involvement in a history of difference" (Brown 2001: 767).

Also focused on the local context, Neville Alexander argues that South Africans still experience their racial and cultural identity as being prior to their national identity. He lays some of the blame for this situation on national metaphors such as the 'rainbow nation' which portray such sub-national identities as fixed and homogeneous, and do not provide South Africans with the means for conceptualising the contingent nature of difference and the fluidity of cultural boundaries (Alexander 2002). He feels that in order for this to change, and for South Africans to create an identity that is first and foremost South African, we must "open windows onto one another, allow as much mutual influence to happen as possible" (2002: 107).

The image that emerges from the discussions of the three scholars quoted above is one in which different cultures within multicultural societies may find a source of coherence and integration by focusing on their differences as relative rather than absolute, and by finding points around which their various world views may meet, rendering them mutually compatible and comprehensible. For Brown, research and teaching may provide impetus for such a change by highlighting the relational and mutually constitutive nature of identities in South Africa. Following Baumann's and Alexander's conceptualisations, this change would be driven by regular interaction between 'different' South Africans, and by individuals adopting an attitude that focuses on degrees of similarity, rather than on absolute differences.

What is clear from the analysis of the perceptions of research participants that opened this chapter is that the development of such an attitude towards difference is not an inevitable consequence of living in a multicultural society. Individuals may choose to close themselves off from other cultural or racial groups, and in so doing, resist processes of social change. The 'folk theories' discussed above may provide a means for individuals to justify their choices. For example, if one believes one has the power to change society and one chooses not to, one invites accusations of culpability for continued racial and social division. However, if one assumes that change is precipitated by macro structures or the social environment over which one has little control, the ramifications of one's

own choices are minimised, and one avoids being held accountable for a lack of social transformation.

These beliefs and their utilisation in processes of justifying one's choices to oneself have implications for the role of music in social change. If one believes that taste in music is determined largely by social factors beyond one's control, and that by the time one reaches adulthood one's tastes are fixed, one can legitimate an attitude of indifference to the music enjoyed by other racial or cultural groups. One can justify insulating oneself from musical difference by pleading powerlessness over the circumstances that shaped one's tastes during childhood and adolescence. For individuals who adopt an attitude such as this, it is unlikely that music will provide a catalyst for a changed self-identity, or for the establishment of new modes of social interaction. Similarly, for individuals who insist on relegating music to the abstract realm of the aesthetic, and who thus ignore its potential for establishing new social meanings, it is unlikely that music will be involved in negotiating points of cultural convergence. For research participants who held this attitude, music provided a means for setting themselves apart from others, rather than for imagining common ground.

There were also those who did not feel the need to justify their choice to remain insulated within their own racial group, and listen only to music that reaffirms this pre-existing identity. For individuals such as Bronwyn, difference based on categories of 'race' is a self-evident fact – an impression that was confirmed in her mind by the racial difference she saw as being represented by 'black music' such as kwaito.

One possible weakness of Baumann's discussion of 'cultural convergence' is its implication that interaction between cultures will *inevitably* lead to the establishment of points of common ground. As the above-mentioned examples illustrate, individuals living in multicultural societies may resist the development of such a relational attitude to difference. Further evidence for dismissing the claim that multicultural interaction will necessarily lead to 'cultural convergence' is provided by reactions to the crossover of Mandoza, discussed in Chapter 2. Although some research participants regarded

'crossover kwaito' as a potential symbol of a shared, non-racial South African identity, others insisted that kwaito is a black cultural phenomenon in which whites have no right to participate. This indicates – contrary to Baumann – that the development of points of 'cultural convergence' may be a contested process, in which the 'source group' for the cultural symbol may oppose its inclusive use as a symbol of shared identity. If power differentials are included in the field of analysis, it is clear why disempowered groups may interpret sharing as 'theft' or 'appropriation'. If individuals experience difference and social inequality as an ineluctable fact of life, they may not feel the need to justify their choice to maintain musical difference.

However, for some of those research participants who expressed the belief that individual agency could affect social change, music played a role in providing impetus for a movement away from exclusive group identities towards more inclusive identities that cut across divisions such as 'race' and class. For these individuals, music served as a means for "open[ing] windows" onto other cultures, as discussed by Alexander (2002: 107). Music was also involved in developing the relational understanding of difference, discussed by the scholars above as important for facilitating intercultural communication, and for negotiating an identity shared across cultures.

The most obvious way in which music allowed for this intercultural exposure was in contexts where it served as an entry point into interpersonal communication with cultural 'others'. This was the case for research participants such as Anne, Devasha and Natasha. For example, Devasha described using kwaito as a means of communicating with other listeners in order to learn about the language, experience and humour of other South Africans. From such interaction, it is possible that a relational understanding of identity may emerge, and that points of cultural convergence may be established. Over and above this direct interaction, however, listening to various types of music allowed Devasha to imagine a point of cultural convergence – the constant exposure to difference – around which a shared national identity may emerge. Clearly, this formed part of Devasha's efforts to think about identities and experience in South Africa in a more relational way. This approach resonates with Brown's argument that South African solidarity should be

based on a "shared problematic" of engaging with difference, rather than on a spuriously imagined sameness (2001: 767). Tina provides a further example of the role of music in the development of this relational way of thinking about difference. This is clear in the following exchange:

**MR: Do you ever think about who else might listen to the same sort of South African music you do?**

**Tina: Um...ya...if I imagine like, maybe it's a controversial song I listen to, I perhaps try and think about like what other people might be thinking, if it's controversial like that, people that it might be offensive to, what they might be thinking, you know? Like that anti-Indian song, that Mbongeni Ngema song [she is referring to the song "AmaIndia"], I sort of just listened and tried to imagine what a Zulu friend of mine, last year, might have been thinking, and that disturbs me a lot, and show, I suppose what power music has to communicate.**

Other research participants agreed that music could allow them to imagine the perspective of others. For example Emcy made the following comment:

**I listen to anybody irrespective of their backgrounds. But what it does help you, [listening to musicians] with different backgrounds, [is] you get to see where they come from, it gives you insight, it gives you better understanding, you grow more, you get to know your country better, and the different cultures and things like that, so I think that it gives you more like...tolerance, or what would be the word? Understanding, you know.**

Some might interpret this as merely being a form of 'tourism' of the musical imaginary (Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000). In assessing this criticism it is useful to return to the distinction made by Chapman between the type of cultural education in which the learner "venture[s] into other people's worlds and venture[s] out again", and education that "engender[s] semantic compatibility between distinctive language-cultural systems" (quoted in Brown 2001: 769). From the words that Emcy uses to describe the benefits of listening to the music of others – "insight", "understanding", "tolerance" – the education provided seems to have less to do with learning about difference for difference's sake, than about imagining the perspective of another, by putting oneself 'in their shoes'. It seems plausible to argue that this imaginative switching between self and other may contribute to developing the intercultural compatibility mentioned by Chapman.

Janice provides a further example of the role of music in enabling the listener to learn about the experiences of others, and thus to work towards intercultural compatibility and understanding:

**...a lot of times when someone would come from a different background as you, they write about things from their background, things that they've experienced, and you can't always relate to it. But sometimes if you actually take the time and you find out a little about the type of music or the background that they come from, you can learn to appreciate it.**

In all of these examples, music is involved in the production of dialogical knowledge. Tomlinson defines this as the "precarious manouever of clearing space and building in it a discourse that never pushes other ways of knowing beyond its own horizons" (quoted in Wong 2000: 89). He argues that this practice "is unsettling precisely because it works against our natural impulse to be settled in the complacency of our own rules and terms. It threatens because it relinquishes the comforting idea of mastering a fully cleared space with open horizons in order instead to scrutinize uneasily the mysterious others crowding in on it" (ibid: 69). For Alexander, it is precisely this unsettling and destabilising of insular categories of identity that is essential if South Africans are to move towards a transformed, truly integrated national identity.

As the above discussion demonstrates, an analysis of the perceptions of research participants regarding music and social change may allow us to expand on the broad theories of change in multicultural societies discussed at the beginning of this section. Specifically, it may allow us to take into account the role of individual agency in opposing or facilitating changed identities and modes of social interaction. It may also provide insight into how individuals make sense of, and legitimate, their own choices through reference to various 'folk theories' of the formation of taste in music and of the relationship between individual and society.

# Chapter 8:
# Conclusion

To conclude a research project such as this, which has focused on detailed ethnographic analysis, it seems appropriate to draw some general theoretical conclusions. Primarily, I wish to address the question: How can a study such as this contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the musical imaginary, and the ways in which individual listeners negotiate the boundaries between self and other through music? I will focus the answer to this question around two areas: the relationship between individual agency and dominant discourses moulding the musical imaginary, and the role of imagining through music in processes of social change.

## Individual agency and dominant discourses

In their discussion of the 'musical imaginary', Born and Hesmondhalgh stress that when exploring identifications through music it is important to "address…the way that cultural expectations and norms, or dominant musical discourses, may be in tension with individual identities and may exert powerful pressures of musical subjectification" (2000: 33). In analyzing processes through which research participants perceive, interrogate, and internalise dominant discourses constructing the relationship between music and 'race' in South Africa, I was able to explore the relationship between agency and discursive structures at the level of the individual subject. It was clear that, at times, individual goals of identification were at odds with dominant discourses constructing the racial and social meanings of a particular genre. However, it seems to me that to conceptualise the relationship between dominant discourses and individual agency as a simple, polarised dichotomy in which each vies for causal supremacy is a vast reduction of the dynamic at play in the operation of the 'musical imaginary'. Even understanding the relationship as dialectical seems inadequate and vague, possibly because of the "notoriously murky" nature of the concept (Rubinstein 2001: 140). It was my goal to clarify this relationship

by abstracting from the interviews generalisations concerning the assertion of individual agency.

Before I begin this discussion, however, it is necessary to clarify my use of the term 'agency'. My understanding of the concept is informed by Rubinstein's discussion of scholars such as Wittgenstein and Charles Taylor. Rubinstein outlines Wittgenstein's argument that social 'rules' exist only in their application in particular contexts (Rubinstein 2001). He also makes reference to Taylor, who contends that the enactment of an abstract social norm is "a continual 'interpretation' and reinterpretation of what the rule really means" (quoted in Rubinstein 2001: 81). From these arguments, Rubinstein concludes that although certain constraints curtail the freedom of individual interpretation of social norms, "the problematic nature of enacting a rule requires a capacity for agency that is beyond the normative drone of cultural determinism...Rules are not substitutes for agency: their application *requires* it" (Rubinstein 2001: 81, italics in original). Following from these ideas, it seems that it is in the act of translating the 'rules' of the relationship between music and 'race' from the realm of the abstract into particular social contexts that the agency of the listener lies. Following from this definition of the term, I will now discuss the various approaches taken by listeners in interpreting the 'rules' constructing the music tastes of racial groups, and how these approaches allowed listeners a degree of influence over what they imagined through music. Although the purpose of these generalisations is to simplify the preceding analysis into an abstracted form suitable for application in other contexts, I have attempted to highlight factors potentially complicating the assertion of individual agency where necessary.

The first way in which individual listeners may exercise agency vis-à-vis discursive structures is in the act of receiving, reflecting on, and internalising the dominant discourses constructing the relationship between music and 'race'. As I discussed in Chapter 2, individuals become aware of these discourses via various channels of dissemination. By ranking the relative reliability of these various channels, individual listeners may verify the received norms concerning 'race' and music, and may choose to reject aspects of the discourse as incompatible with their lived experience. In so doing,

they may modify the imaginary of the genre according to their own goals of identification. An example of this is provided by Chris, as discussed in Chapter 2, who referred to his own observations of the increasingly racially mixed audiences at rock performances in disputing the label of rock as 'white music'. The multiplicity of channels through which the social norms of music taste are disseminated allows individuals a degree of freedom in interpreting these norms in a way that renders them most suitable for their own ends of identification.

However, the interaction between dominant discursive constructions and individual interpretations of the relationship between racial identity and music do not take place in a vacuum. Various social factors may influence the channels through which social norms are received, in some cases limiting the scope for individual interpretation. An example of this is the potentially limiting role of social networks and class position. If one does not have the financial resources to attend live performances where one may witness other listeners, and if one's social relationships are with others of the same racial classification who conform to dominant ideas concerning the 'appropriate' taste in music, the picture that one forms of the relationship between racial identity and music taste in South Africa is likely to be determined to a large extent by dominant discourses present in society. In this case, the limitations imposed on the individual's experience of music in South Africa result in a situation in which s/he has no recourse to alternative applications of the 'rules' of music listening with which more reductive discourses may be critiqued.

A second way in which individuals may exercise agency exists in the case of certain genres where the dominant construction of the demographic of their audience is ambiguous. This ambiguity provides a second point of entry for listeners to engage with the imaginary of the music, interpreting it and manipulating it for their own ends. An example of this is provided by South African jazz. As I discussed in Chapter 4 (pp 54-57), competing discourses constructing the relationship between jazz and 'race' were evident among research participants. Some of these emphasise the inclusive and non-racial quality of South African jazz, while others construct jazz as an expression of racial and/or ethnic identity in various ways. Listeners are likely to make use of whichever of

these discourses is most compatible with their own strategies of identification when imagining through the music.

It is also clear that even in the case of a music genre rigidly linked to racial identity, such as kwaito, possibilities exist among the multiple elements that contribute to musical meaning for listeners to negotiate their own subjective readings. This constitutes the third possible way in which listeners may assert a degree of agency over the imaginary of the music. By contesting the primary determinant of meaning of a particular song or genre, listeners are able to contest who and/or what may be imagined through the music. The various interpretations of the role of language in shaping the meanings of kwaito discussed in Chapter 3 provide an example of this. Contrasting interpretations allowed different processes of imaginative identification to take place. A further example is provided by Nosipho, who, in the listening interview classified Boo! as jazz rather than rock by focusing on certain elements in the music (in this case, the trumpet line), and downplaying others. Through this reclassification, she could draw on the entirely different discourses that surround the genre of jazz when she imagined others through the music of Boo!. It is worth noting, however, that this process of interpretation took place in an artificially created situation: I played her the track, which she had never heard before, without giving her any background to the artist or the music. Had she encountered the music in a more typical situation, she would have been provided with some context directing her classification in some way; the radio station on which it was played for example, or the identity of the friend in whose CD collection it appeared. Once again, it is clear that the contexts in which music is experienced and in which the norms regarding the listeners of that music are disseminated may both constrain and enable the musical imaginary.

It is important to emphasise that accepting dominant discourses constructing the audiences of music along racial lines as a reasonably accurate reflection of reality does not preclude individual listeners from exercising a degree of agency in imagining themselves and others through the music. This is clear in the different acts of imaginative identification enabled by a single discursive construction. Listeners appropriating

dominant discourses and utilising them for their own ends of identity construction provides the fourth example of the assertion of individual agency. For example, research participants Bronwyn and Anne made contrasting appropriations of the discourse of kwaito as music listened to and produced primarily by black people. Anne's reasoning took the following form: kwaito is music listened to and enjoyed primarily by black people, therefore if I listen to kwaito I align myself with the black majority in Africa, and thus affirm my self-identity as an African who belongs in this continent. On the other hand, Bronwyn's explanation for her feelings about kwaito went as follows: black people produce and listen to kwaito, therefore I don't listen to it because I am white, and to be white is to be fundamentally different from being black. From this vastly different utilisation of the same dominant discourse linking kwaito to a racially defined audience, it is clear that dominant discourses cannot by themselves dictate the processes of identification in which they are implicated, even if the listener accepts the discourse as true. Multiple other discourses shaping the individual's understanding of concepts such as 'race', as well as their own goals of identification, come into play when determining the dynamics of the musical imaginary.

A further way in which individuals may exercise agency in their engagement with dominant discourses linking music and 'race' is by using these discourses as an entry point into an interrogation of related issues regarding 'race' and racial division in South Africa. For example, Linda was able to problematise bio-culturalist understandings of 'race' by critiquing the logic of dominant discourses linking taste in music to racial identity. She detected in these discourses similar logic to that employed by many of her friends who, in her experience, assume that sharing a racial classification with another person necessarily implies sharing a way of life with them, including preferences in music. Similarly, by exploring the roots of racial division in taste in music, Khaya could critique essentialist notions of the connection between 'race' and culture, including music-listening practices. He explained racial division in music preferences in terms of the prevalence of South Africans growing up in an environment in which the boundaries between 'race', place and music coincide. By explaining racialised music tastes as contingent on this historically specific situation, he could refute bio-culturalist notions of

the relationship between 'race' and music preference. These examples illustrate the point that by highlighting the flawed logic underpinning discourses positing a determinative relationship between 'race' and taste in music, listeners may loosen to some extent the ties binding the 'musical imaginary' of a particular genre to a racialising discourse. In so doing, they may legitimate alternate imaginings through the music.

I began this discussion by suggesting that when listeners apply abstract 'rules' of music listening to particular contexts, an act of interpretation, and thus of agency, is required. Some may object to this argument, protesting that listeners do not always interpret these 'rules' at a conscious level, and that some seem to accept dominant discourses unquestioningly. The question may then be asked: How do such unreflective listeners pursue ends of identity construction through music? I would respond to this that, whether conscious or not, every individual has a perception of themselves and their relationship to others. It seems plausible to argue that a person's application of social 'rules' – in this case those concerning the music 'appropriate' for particular racial groups – will be motivated by this self-perception. In this view, every act of choosing to listen to some sorts of music while rejecting others has ends of identification; however, the extent to which an individual is *conscious* of these goals and strategically utilises music as a tool to achieve these ends varies from listener to listener. In some cases, it is relatively easy to detect this reflexivity – specifically when, by 'breaking the rules', a listener utilises music to generate new identifications that cross-cut existing social boundaries: for example, when non-blacks listen to kwaito. This listening choice necessitates some self-justification, as discussed in Chapter 3, which requires some reflection on one's motivations and place in the social landscape. However, this does not imply that listening to music to reaffirm prior identities necessarily requires no reflexivity or awareness of what one is doing. This interpretation risks rehashing old dichotomies of a few active listeners versus the passive majority (Negus 1996: 20). Take, for example, Bronwyn's attitude to kwaito. She doesn't listen to it, because it is 'black music' and she is 'white'. Some might interpret this as the mindless following of a social 'rule'. However, her explanation for her choices presents the possibility that something more is at play. She expresses an active dislike of kwaito, and uses her criticisms of the music to justify her

feelings of dislike for the people she sees the genre as representing. One cannot discount the possibility that this interpretation is the product of her reflection on the boundary between self and other, and the reasons for the legitimacy of this boundary. However, as my interview questions were not designed to elicit this information, it is not possible to state with any certainty the degree of conscious reflection involved in the musical identifications made by research participants, such as Bronwyn, whose music-listening choices did not oppose dominant social norms. Investigating the role of self-conscious reflection among listeners who 'obey' social norms of listening seems to present a potentially fruitful area for further research.

In the above discussion, I have outlined specific ways in which individual listeners may exercise agency over what they imagine through music, and in so doing, pursue their personal goals of identity construction. I have also mentioned a number of factors potentially constraining individual agency, and it is necessary to mention one more. Inevitably, each individual's goals of identity construction are determined through an interplay of multiple factors. They are not freely chosen, but come into being in the context of various social discourses, each exerting its own influence on the development of the individual's self-perception. Therefore, the identifications achieved through music are not exclusively the fulfilment of individual goals, but of goals emerging through the interaction of individual agency and dominant social discourses.

## The musical imaginary and the generation of new identities

As I have mentioned previously, one of my goals in this study was to assess to what extent the musical imaginary could contribute to generating new identities. The incompleteness of Born and Hesmondhalgh's discussion of this issue (as discussed on page 153) motivated in me the desire to pin down specific instances of how imagining through music contribute to changed identities. One issue that puzzled me was the relationship between the intent of the listener – mentioned by Born and Hesmondhalgh as important in determining whether or not an act of imagining through music will give rise to a new identity – and the actualisation of a transformed identity. In an attempt to

address this question, I have discussed in the previous chapter how one may distinguish between two types of transformed identities – those that allow for face-to-face interaction, and those that are primarily imagined identifications. I have pointed out how various social constraints may prevent a transformed imagined identity from translating into new modes of social interaction. For example, someone like Janice, discussed in Chapter 5, may have imagined herself as a rock fan, but was unable to interact with other rock fans due to her social and geographical environment. Despite the limitations of new identities that are purely imaginary, I wish to suggest that both imagined and socially actualised identities may give rise to social change – though in different ways. As this research project has focused on racial identity, I will deal specifically with social change relating to issues of 'race'.

A transformed musically imagined identity that cuts across boundaries of racial classification has the potential to affect social change in two ways. Firstly, it may challenge the perceptions of those with whom the individual interacts socially, by upsetting an image of South Africa in which there is a neat fit between racial classification and taste in music. Evidence for this is provided by Zee's remarks, in which he explained that one reason he believes racial groups are becoming less divided in terms of both identity and music preferences is the diverse nature of the music enjoyed by his black friends. It seems likely that such disjunctures between dominant ideas about the norms of racial groups and the actual behaviour of individuals will contribute to the gradual erosion of 'race thinking' in South Africa.

The second way in which an imagined identity may contribute to social change stems from the possibility that, at some point, the barriers preventing an imagined non-racial identity from translating into social interaction across racial boundaries may fall away. Again, Janice provides an illustration of this: once she left the racially homogeneous environment in which she spent her childhood and teenage years, her non-racial self-perception – affirmed by her love of rock music as a coloured person – allowed her to establish social relationships with individuals of other racial groups and to form new group identifications extending beyond the boundaries of 'race'. In enabling these new

modes of social interaction, facilitated by musically imagined transformed self-perceptions, music may play a role in processes of social change.

To return to Rubinstein's (2001) discussion of Wittgenstein's theory of rule following, collective experience provides the context that directs the individual's interpretation of society's 'rules'. Therefore if music allows for new social relationships to be formed, new interpretations of old norms linking music taste to racial identity may be re-negotiated, and old limiting stereotypes may be rejected. These new interpretations may eventually challenge the old norm sufficiently for it to fall from social dominance, and to no longer exert the same force on the formation of the subjectivities of individual South Africans. However, it is important to temper any idealistic reading of the potential of music to contribute to the creation of a non-racial society with an awareness that as long as other life experiences remain racialised, such as socio-economic status or the rallying of political parties for racial votes, the establishment of new identities based on criteria cross-cutting racial boundaries remains a challenge.

A great deal of imaginative identity construction is enabled by listening to music. When establishing imaginary identifications with others through music, listeners must speculate as to the commonalities represented by the music: what is it that is shared, and by whom? Because the answers to these questions are always up for contestation by others claiming the music for their own ends, the 'musical imaginary' provides the ideal realm in which tensions between difference and sameness may be explored, making it suitable both for the entrenchment of old identities, and for the emergence of new ones. Analysing the perceptions and experiences of individual South Africans may give us greater insight into the factors influencing the dynamics of these processes, and the creativity and resourcefulness displayed by listeners as they negotiate their place in the world through music.

# Appendix A:

**List of interviewees[22]**

Aarti: An Indian, 20-year-old, English-speaking female from Overport Durban. She is a Hindu from a middle-class background. (She is a third year Psychology student)

Amanda: a white, 25-year-old, English-speaking female, from the Bluff, Durban. She is a "lapsed Catholic" from a middle-class background. (She works in management at an educational institution)

Andile: a black, 21-year-old, Zulu-speaking female from Umlazi. She is Christian, and comes from a middle-class background.

Anne: a white, 25-year-old, English-speaking female from Durban. She has no religious affiliation, and is from a middle class background. (She is pursuing studies in music at a postgraduate level)

Bronwyn: a white, 23-year-old, English-speaking female from Grahamstown. She has no religious affiliation and comes from a middle-class background. (She works as a waitress)

Chris: a white, 20-year-old, English-speaking male from Durban. He has no religious affiliation, and comes from a middle-class background.

Colin: a white, 21-year-old English-speaking male from Johannesburg. He is Christian and is from a middle-class background.

David D: a black, 23-year-old Xhosa speaking male originally from the Eastern Cape, but now resident in Durban. He is Christian, and from a middle-class background. (He works full time at a music retail shop.)

David S: a coloured, 25-year-old English-speaking male from Wentworth, Durban. He is Anglican, and is from a middle-class background. (He is completing a B Mus degree in jazz at UKZN.)

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[22] Each research participant was asked to give their racial self-classification (as I explained in Chapter 1, page 5), age, mother tongue, town of residence, and religious affiliation. I also asked research participants to tell me about their parents' jobs, whether they attended a government, Model C, or private school, and how many siblings they have, in order to ascertain their class position. Some research participants volunteered extra information about themselves which I have included in brackets at the end of the entry.

Devasha: an Indian, 20-year-old English-speaking female from Tongaat, KwaZulu-Natal. She is Christian, and from a middle-class background.

Emcy: a white, 20-year-old, English- and Afrikaans speaking female from Durban. She is Christian from a middle-class background.

George: a white, a 24-year-old, English speaking male who grew up in Bloemfontein, but now lives in Durban. He is a Hindu from a middle-class background. (He is in his third year of a Bmus degree.)

Jacqui: a white, 20-year-old, English-speaking female from Germiston. She has no religious affiliation, and comes from a middle-class background.

Jamiel: An Indian, 20-year-old, English-speaking male from Overport, Durban. He is a Muslim, and comes from a middle class-background.

Janice: A coloured, 24-year-old, English-speaking female from Newlands East, Durban. She is a Christian, and comes from a middle-class background. (She is currently studying a postgraduate degree in Education.)

Janine: a white, 22-year-old English-speaking female from Johannesburg. She is a Christian, and comes from a middle-class background (She is currently studying a degree in Drama.)

Khaya: a black, 21-year-old Zulu-speaking male who lives in Morningside, Durban. He is a Christian and comes from a middle-class background.

Lenny: a black 25-year-old Zulu-speaking male from Mandeni, KwaZulu-Natal. He has no religious affiliation, and comes from a relatively disadvantaged background. (He is studying a postgraduate degree in music in Durban.)

Leon: a coloured, 20-year-old, English-speaking male from a middle-class background. He lives in Empangeni and is studying a B Mus degree.

Linda: a black, 19-year-old, Zulu-speaking female from Pietermaritzburg. She is a Christian from a middle-class background.

Mzi: a black, 18-year-old, Xhosa-speaking male from Port Edward. He describes himself as "sort of" a Christian, and comes from a middle-class background. (He is a first year student studying Accountancy.)

Natasha: an Indian, 20-year-old, English-speaking female from Effingham Heights, Durban. She is a Hindu from a middle-class background. (She is a third year Psychology student.)

Nosipho: a black, 20-year-old, Zulu-speaking female from Westville. She is a Christian from a middle-class background.

Ntatho: a black, 21-year-old, Zulu-speaking female from Mandeni in KwaZulu Natal. She is a Christian, and comes from a relatively disadvantaged background. (She is studying a BMus in jazz.)

Prince: a black, 22-year-old, English-speaking male from Newlands East. He is a Christian, and grew up in a relatively disadvantaged background. (He works as a sales assistant at a music retail outlet, and is a member of a local hip hop group.)

Shashi: a white, 23-year-old, English-speaking female from Johannesburg. She has no religious affiliation, and comes from a middle class background. (She is studying a BA at Rhodes University, Grahamstown.)

Themba: a black, 21-year-old, Xhosa-speaking male from Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape. He is a Christian, and comes from a disadvantaged background. (He is completing a B Mus degree in jazz.)

Tina: a black, 22-year-old, Xhosa-speaking female She comes from Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape, She has no religious affiliation, and comes from a middle-class background. (She is studying a postgraduate degree in Music.)

Vumani: a black, 25-year-old Zulu speaking male from Umlazi, Durban. He is a Christian who comes from a relatively disadvantaged background, but who received a sponsorship from a local priest to attend a private Catholic school. (He works as a sales assistant at a music retail outlet.)

Zama: a black, 22-year-old, Venda-speaking female from the Northwest Province. She is a Christian, and comes from a middle-class background. (She is studying a postgraduate degree in Music in Durban.)

Zee: a black, 21-year-old, Zulu-speaking male from Mandeni in KwaZulu Natal. He is an Anglican from a middle-class background.

# Appendix B:

## List of Bands and Artists

**Arthur (full name Arthur Mafokate):** A South African musician, singer, producer, performer, songwriter and television personality, Arthur is credited as one of the creators of the genre of kwaito. He drew public attention with his 1995 EP entitled *Kaffir*, on which the title track asserts black independence by rejecting the label 'kaffir' and all of its associations with the racial oppression of apartheid. He has achieved a huge following over the years, and has been dubbed 'The King of Kwaito' by South African kwaito fans. Other hits include "Oyi! Oyi!" in 1997, and most recently "Sika Lekhekhe" (2005), which, although popular among fans, has been criticised for its sexually explicit lyrics, and the degrading image it portrays of women.
(http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=92 and http://www.musica.co.za/eMusica/news_article.asp?segmentID=99&GenreID=99&ArticleID=1476)

**Badu, Erykah:** An African-American R&B and hip hop artist, who incorporates elements of jazz and soul into her music. She was born Erica Wright, but discarded what she considered to be a 'slave name' in favour of Erikah Badu – 'Badu' is derived from the Arabic for 'to manifest truth and light'. She is well known for singles such as "On and On" and "Tyrone".
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erykah_Badu)

**Bon Jovi:** A US quintet based in New Jersey, Bon Jovi evolved from a pop metal group of the late 80s to a hard rock and ballad outfit in the 90s. They first achieved popularity with the catchy tunes of songs such as "Livin' on a Prayer" (1986) and "Bad Medicine" (1988).
(Erlewine,
http://www.vh1.com/artists/az/bon_jovi/bio.jhtml)

**Boo!** A South African trio playing an eclectic mix of pop, dance music and elements borrowed from local indigenous musical idioms. Defying classification, Boo! label their music 'Monki Punk'. Formed in 1997, Boo! have had a number of top 20 hits in South Africa, but are most famed for their eccentric live performances, which include cross-dressing on the part of Chris Chameleon, the band's lead vocalist and bassist. The other band members are Ampie Omo (trumpet, trombone, percussion and backing vocals) and Princess Leonie (drums).
(http://www.powerzone.co.za/scripts/power.dll?pagename=pzbandmain&band=235)

**Clegg, Johnny:** This singer and songwriter is arguably one of the best-known pop artists to emerge from South Africa. With his group Savuka and his collaboration with friend

and fellow artist Sipho Mchunu, Clegg achieved international success with the albums: *Third World Child*; *Shadow Man*; *Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful World*; *Heat, Dust & Dreams* and many hit singles such as "Scatterlings Of Africa", "I Call Your Name" and especially "Asimbonanga" between the years 1985 and 1993. While Johnny Clegg is still active and has released more albums, it is this period for which he is most well known. (http://juluka.free.fr/index1.htm)

**Coltrane, John:** Coltrane is considered to be one of the most influential jazz saxophonists of all time. Throughout his career he collaborated with other legendary artists such as Miles Davis, Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner and Cannonball Adderley, among others. Some of his best known work includes the albums *A Love Supreme*, which he recorded in the 1950s, and *My Favourite Things* (1960), in which he experimented with modal avant garde jazz, including techniques such as 'sheets of sound'.
(New Grove Dictionary of Jazz,
http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_coltrane_john.htm)

**Creed:** A US modern rock group, formed in 1995, consisting of the members Scott Stapp (vocals), Mark Tremonti (lead guitar, vocals and studio bassist), Brian Marshall (bass), and Scott Phillips (drums). The band achieved huge commercial success with tracks such as "Higher" and "With Arms Wide Open." However, some critics accused them of being derivative of the Seattle grunge sound, especially of the band Pearl Jam and their vocalist, Eddie Vedder. Creed disbanded in 2004.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creed_(band)

**Davis, Miles:** Miles Davis was born May 26, 1926. He is considered to be one of the most important figures in jazz, having contributed much to both trumpet playing and composition within the genre. Miles Davis had an extensive recording career that spanned four decades, producing landmark albums like: *Kind of Blue* (1959), *Birth of the Cool* (1949), and *Bitches Brew* (1970).
(http://www.milesdavis.com/bio.htm
http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/2822/miles_davis.html)

**Dludlu, Jimmy:** Zimbabwean-born jazz guitarist. Dludlu has achieved huge popularity, commercial success and critical acclaim. He has performed with numerous Southern Afircan artists, ranging from groups such Mpandze from Swaziland in the early years of his career, to McCoy Mrubata, Moses Molelekwa and Barney Rachabane more recently. He has received various awards throughout his career, including SAMA awards in 1998 and 2000. His musical influences include both traditional and modern elements of jazz drawn from artists such as Wes Montgomery, George Benson and Pat Metheny, as well as South African musicians Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbulu, Hugh Masekela, Themba Mokwena, and Allen Kwela.
(http://www.aboutentertainment.co.za/database/jimmy_d.htm)

**Eminem:** Born Marshall Bruce Mathers III on October 17, 1972, Eminem is arguably the most successful white rapper of all time. He released his first full-length debut, *Infinite*, in 1996. The *Slim Shady* EP was released in 1998. After this, the artist and producer Dr. Dre signed Eminem to his record label after hearing Eminem 'freestyling' on a Los Angeles radio station. The *Slim Shady* LP was released on February 23, 1999. It soon hit number two on the Billboard charts and later went three times platinum. Since then, Eminem has continued to achieve commercial success with offerings including his second full length CD, entitled *The Marshall Mathers LP*.
(http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0004896/bio)

**E-Void:** This group was formed in 1977 and were known then as Void. In 1983 they became éVoid with painted faces, tribal dances and jive rhythms. This group will be remembered particularly for their international hit *Taximan* (1983).
(Waddacor, M., September 2000.
http://www.rock.co.za/files/evoid.html)

**Faku, Feya:** A South African jazz trumpeter who counts as his influences Duke Makasi from Soul Jazzmen, Barney Rachabane, Dextor Gordon, and various indigenous South African music styles. He has played with well-known South African jazz artists such as Abdullah Ibrahim, McCoy Mrubata, and Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi, as well as Dutch bassist Eric van der Westen.
(http://www.artsmart.co.za/music/archive/168.html
http://www.williambowles.info/musicsa/profiles/faku.html)

**Fourplay:** A quartet consisting of keyboardist Bob James, guitarist Lee Ritenour, bassist Nathan East, and drummer Harvey Mason. Fourplay was formed in 1991 for James' album *Grand Piano Canyon.* They have since recorded a number of albums for Warner Brothers, all of which have been big sellers. Their music is a mixture of jazz improvisation, R&B, and pop.
(Yanow,
http://www.vh1.com/artists/az/fourplay/bio.jhtml)

**Gumede, Sipho:** A South African jazz bassist. Gumede started his career in the 1970s, playing with musicians such as Bheki Mseleku in the group Spirits Rejoice, and later with Khaya Mahlangu in Sakhile. His music is a mixture of fusion and smooth jazz. He is well-known for compositions such as "Mantombi", and the gold-selling album *Blues for my Mother.*
(http://www.sheer.co.za/sipho.html)

**Houston, Whitney:** One of the most commercially successful and critically acclaimed female vocalists in popular music history. She performs and composes in the genres of

pop, R&B, gospel, and soul, and is also a record producer and actress. Some of her well-known hits include "Greatest Love of All" (1985), "I'm Every Woman (1992), and "My Love is Your Love" (1998).
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston)

**Ibrahim, Abdullah:** Born Adolphes Johannes Brand in 1934 in Cape Town South Africa, Ibrahim became one of South Africa's best-known jazz musicians. He was known as Dollar Brand until his name change and conversion to Islam in 1968. In his early career he played with alto saxophonist Kippie Moketsi and trumpeter Hugh Masekela in The Jazz Epistles. In the late 70s, after spending a number of years out of the country, he recorded with various South African musicians, producing tracks such as "Mannenburg", which became an anthem for oppressed South Africans in the era after the 1976 Soweto uprising. He spent some years in self-imposed exile from South Africa in protest against the policies of the apartheid government, during which time he garnered international acclaim for what came to be known as the 'Ekapa' jazz sound. He is best known for his solo jazz piano, as well as his collaborations with musicians such as Archie Shepp, Max Roach, and the South African multi-instrumentalist, Johnny Dyani.
(http://junior.apk.net/~hoon/6dAI_Bio.html)

**Jimmy 12 Inch:** South African hard rock band consisting of drummer Adam Stanley, keyboardist Neil Breytenbach, brothers Gary (guitar) and Warren (bass) Hiebner, and front man and guitarist Nick Olsen. They disbanded in 2001 after four years of recording, touring, and performing with other top South African rock bands such as Springbok Nude Girls. Musically, their influences included ska and punk
(http://www.sarockdigest.com/archives/issue_90.html)

**Johannes Kerkorrel (real name Ralph Rabie):** Kerkorrel started his career in 1980s as a caberet performer of political satire. In 1987 he formed the Gerevormeerde Blues Band with Koos Kombuis, among others. This band appealed to young white Afrikaners who were opposed to the autocratic and racist policies of the apartheid government. After 1994, Kerkorrel continued recording and touring, levelling political critique where he saw it as necessary. Kerkorrel committed suicide in 2002.
(http://www.roekeloos.co.za/argief/kerkorrel.html)

**Kombuis, Koos:** Kombuis was one of the pioneers of the 'Afrikaner Alternatiewe Beweging' (The Afrikaner Alternative Movement) in music in 1980s South Africa. His lyric-centred compositions range in style from hard rock to melodic ballads. In the Post-apartheid era he continues to write socially engaged Afrikaans rock, including singles such as "Blameer dit op Apartheid" (1997), ("Blame it on Apartheid").
(http://www.struik.co.za/book.author.action?id=3233
http://www.kooskombuis.co.za/Musikant.html)

**Mafikizolo:** A South African Afro-pop trio consisting of Nhlanhla Sibongile Mafu, Theo Kgosinkwe and Tebogo Madingoane, whose music is a blend of traditional South African elements, house beats, and marabi harmonies. The group's most successful offering to date has been their fourth album, *Sibongile,* released in 2002, which yielded the number one single "Hamba Nawe". Their follow up to *Sibongile* was *Kwela*, released in 2003. (http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=160)

**Makeba, Miriam:** Born in 1952, this well-known South African jazz vocalist started her career singing with the Manhattan Brothers. She subsequently joined the all-women group, the Skylarks. In 1959 she played the lead female role in the musical, *King Kong.* She spent time exiled in the US and Guinea. She returned to South Africa in the 80s. Some of her best-known songs include "Pata Pata" and "The Click Song". (http://africanmusic.org/artists/makeba.html)

**Mandoza (born M'du Tshabalala):** A South African kwaito artist. After a brief flirtation with gangster life, which included a jail term for stealing a car, Mandoza entered the South Africa music scene as part of the kwaito group Chiskop. He released his debut solo album, *9 II 5 Zola South*, in 1999, which earned him the Best Newcomer SAMA award. In 2000 he achieved a number one hit on both traditionally 'black' and 'white' radio stations with "Nkalakatha". (http://www.music.org.za?artist.asp?id=94)

**Mango Groove**: This group was formed in 1983 in Johannesburg and was one of South Africa's most commercially successful popular groups during the late 80s and early 90s. The group, fronted by Claire Johnson, have recorded prolifically, producing hit albums like: *Mango Groove* (1989) *Hometalk* (1990) *Another Country* (1993) *The Best Of Mango Groove* (1994) and *Eat A Mango* (1995) (http://www.rock.co.za/files/mango_groove_index.html)

**Mankunku, Winston (aka Winston Mankunku Ngozi):** A South African jazz saxophonist, born in Cape Town in 1943, who names John Coltrane as his most significant musical influence. Unlike many of his jazz compatriots, Mankunku did not go into exile during apartheid, but remained in South Africa. This choice forced him to go to great lengths to circumvent laws preventing inter-racial performance, such as playing under a pseudonym and even hiding behind a curtain during a performance. Some of his best-known albums include *Yakhal'Nkomo* (1968) and *Jika* (1987). (http://www.sheer.co.za/winston.html)

**Mapaputsi:** A South African kwaito artist. Mapaputsi entered the music scene in 1998, and has worked with fellow kwaito artists such as TKZee and M'Du. He began his solo career in 2001 with the album *Izinja.* The title track became a hugely popular hit, and

garnered a number of awards for the artist. His follow-up album, *Kleva*, was released in 2003.
(http://www.peakperformances.co.za/Peak_Music/music_other.html
http://rage.co.za/issue43/mzansmusic2.htm)

**Masekela, Hugh:** Born in 1939, jazz trumpeter Masekela is one of the best-known names in South African jazz, both locally and abroad. In his early days as a musician he played with Abdullah Ibrahim, Jonas Gwangwa and Kippie Moeketsi. In 1961 he went into exile, settling in New York, where he collaborated with many top artists including Miriam Makeba and Fela Kuti, and was involved with the musical *King Kong*. Masekela's 1987 hit, "Bring Him Back Home", became the anthem for the world tour of the recently freed Mandela in 1992. He now lives in South Africa, where he continues to compose, record and perform.
(http://africanmusic.org/artists/masekela.html)

**Max Normal:** A South African group consisting of members Watkin "Waddy" Tudor Jones on vocals, Simon Ringrose on the turntable, Mark Buchanan on bass, and Sean Ou Tim on drums. Max Normal mix elements of jazz, hip hop, and electronic music, while Jones' rhymes range from the fantastical to the quirky to the bitingly satirical. Max Normal released their debut album, *Songs From a Mall,* in 2004.
(Sunday Times, 27 Oct 2005.
http://www.suntimes.co.za/music/news/news-maxnormal.asp
http://www.bluesroom.co.za/pages/Body_past.htm)

**Mazwai, Thandiswa:** Formerly the lead vocalist of Bongo Maffin, a South African kwaito group, Mazwai achieved commercial success and critical recognition with her debut solo album, *Zabalaza*, released in 2004. In 2005 she received the Kora award for Best Female Artist in Southern Africa as well as Best Female Artist in Africa. She describes her music as "African, with a contemporary twist, fusing it with some soul and raga".
(http://www.artmatters.info/thandiswa.htm)

**M'du (full name M'du Masilela):** Hailing from the suburb of Zola in Soweto, M'du is credited as one of the founders of the genre of kwaito. He first achieved recognition in the early 90s as a member of the duo MM Deluxe with Mandla Mofokeng. In 1994 he started his own production company and released his first album *Tsiki Tsiki*. Although playing into the gangster image of kwaito in his younger years, M'Du has married and settled down in the last few years. This is reflected in the growing depth of his lyrics, which now often include a social message. An example of this is "Chomi Ya Bama" off his latest album *24 Seven*, which is condemnation of child and female abuse in South Africa.
(http://www.koraawards.co.za/english/musicawards_finalists_res00.asp?Category_en=Best%20Video%20-%20African)

**Mkhize, Themba:** A South African jazz pianist. Mkhize has been on the jazz scene for around two decades, although he only released his first album as a bandleader, *Tales*, in 1999. He has toured and performed with the likes of Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba and Sibongile Khumalo. His music is a blend of contemporary jazz and the South African vocal style 'isintu'.
(Slawecki,
http://www.allaboutjazz.com/southafrica/globalv.htm)

**Molelekwa, Moses:** South African jazz pianist. Molelekwa grew up in the township of Tembisa, and after graduating with a diploma in piano studies from the Federal Union of Black Arts, began making a name for himself on the local jazz scene, playing with musicians such as Miriam Makeba, Jonas Gwangwa and Thembi Mtshali. He was also a founding member of the bands Brotherhood and Umbongo. After spending some time playing keyboard for Hugh Masekela, Molelekwa released his first album, *Finding Oneself* in 1994. His follow up, *Genes and Spirits*, showcases Molelekwa's love of the eclectic, including traditional African elements, contemporary jazz influences, as well as traces of drum and bass and Latin styles. He spent the following two years embarking on exciting musical collaborations with artists such as kwaito group TKZee, and classical pianist Joanna MacGregor. Molelekwa committed suicide in 2001.
(http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=94)

**MXO:** A South African Afro-pop artist. After collaborating with Sliq Angel in the duo Roots 2000, MXO released his debut solo EP, *Another Day*, in 2003. His music is a blend of traditional South African elements, acoustic instrumentation, and hip hop. His latest release is *Piece of Mind* (2004).
(http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=205)

**Ngema, Mbongeni:** Born in 1955, Ngema is a South African playwright, musician, choreographer and director. He has been involved in world-renowned theatre productions such as *Woza Albert!* (1981). As a musician he is best known for his involvement with musical productions such as *Sarafina* (1987). For the film version of *Sarafina* he wrote and produced the score, co-wrote the screenplay, and co-choreographed the dance sequences.
(Killam & Rowe, 2003.
http://people.africadatabase.org/en/profile/3168.html)

**Ngqawana, Zim:** South African jazz saxophonist. Ngqawana achieved local popularity and critical acclaim with his hybrid of contemporary jazz, various traditional South African idioms, avant-garde styles, and western and Indian classical music. Ngqawana has worked with dance companies such as Free Flight Dance Company and the Moving into Dance Company. He has toured America, Africa and Europe, playing with various

accomplished jazz musicians, including Max Roach, Keith Tippett, Dennis Mpale, Andile Yenana and Herbie Tsoaeli.
(http://www.zimology.com/aboutzim.shtml)

**Not My Dog:** A hard rock band from Pretoria, South Africa, formed in 1996. More recently, NMD have entered into collaborations with a variety of South African artists from diverse stylistic backgrounds, producing eclectic sounds that have brought them local popularity and critical acclaim. Highlights from these collaborations include work with members of Brasse Vannie Kaap and Prophets of da City, both local hip hop bands. The band consists of Albert Meintjes (lead vocals), Hugo de Waal (guitarist), Juan le Roux (guitarist), Lanie van der Walt (bass), and Jorik Pienaar (drums).
(http://www.powerzone.co.za/scripts/power.dll?pagename=czbandmain&band=501&locind=1)

**Pink (born Alecia Moore):** US female vocalist who performs in the pop/rock genre, with strong R&B and hip hop influences. She is well known for hits such as "There You Go" (2000) and "Get This Party Started" (2001).
(Who2, 2005.
http://www.who2.com/pink.html)

**Pitch Black Afro (born Thulani Ngcobo):** A South African kwaito/hip hop artist. He emerged onto the scene in 2001, when he started performing at clubs and building up a following. He was spotted by DJ Cleos, who is the producer for top kwaito artists such as Brown Dash and Mzekezeke. In 2004, he released his debut album, *Styling Gel*, which went platinum.
(http://www.ghettoruff.co.za/artists.aspx?rmartistid=34
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4759673)

**Prime Circle:** a South African rock band from Witbank. Prime Circle has achieved significant local popularity and commercial success, achieving the highest sales of any South African rock band in 2003/2004. Their debut album *Hello Crazy World* yielded four number one singles. Band members are Ross Learmonth (vocals and guitar), Gerard Venter (drums), Dirk Bisschoff (lead guitar) and Marco Gomes (bass).
(http://www.powerzone.co.za/scripts/power.dll?pagename=pzbandmain&band=10575)

**Queen:** a British rock band popular in the 1970s and 80s. Well-known hits include "We Are the Champions" and "Bohemian Rhapsody", the latter of which was accompanied by one of the first ever music videos. The music of Queen influenced the development of glam rock and stadium rock. The band's members were Brian May (guitar) and Roger Taylor (drums), John Deacon (bass guitar) and Freddie Mercury (vocals).
(http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/Queen_(band))

**Rabbitt:** Arguably the most successful South African rock band of their time, Rabbitt was formed in 1968 under the name Conglomeration. The band consisted at the time of members Allen Rosenberg (guitar), Neil Cloud (drums), Ronnie Friedman (bass) and Trevor Rabin (guitar, vocals). The group had numerous personnel changes, most notably, the group's principle song-writer, who left before the making of their final album *Rock Rabbitt* (1977). Prior to this, the group had two other highly successful releases, namely *Boys will be Boys* (1975) and *A Croak and A Grunt in the Night* (1976). (http://www.angelfire.com/band/katzen/history.html)

**Ringo (full name Ringo Madlingozi):** South African pop/adult contemporary artist, who sings in isiXhosa, and was the lead singer for the bands Gecko Moon and Peto. In 2001 he won the SAMA award for best African pop album.
(The Africa Centre Londres, 2004.
http://people.africadatabase.org/fr/person/11717.html)

**Roxette:** A duo from Sweden, consisting of Marie Fredriksson and Per Gessle, who achieved numerous hits in the late 80s and early 90s with their catchy pop-rock formula. These include "Joyride" and "It Must Have Been Love".
(http://www.geocities.com/kaktus_17/roxette/)

**Saron Gas:** Saron Gas, now known as Seether, has achieved arguably the highest degree of international fame and success of any South African rock band. Comprising of Shaun Welgemoed (vocals/lead guitar), David Cohoe (drums) and Dale Stewart (bass/backing vocals), Saron Gas emerged onto the local scene in 1999, achieving a number one local hit with "69 Tea". After signing with US label Wind-up Records in 2001, Saron Gas changed their name to Seether and relocated to the US in 2002. They cite as their musical influences bands such as Black Sabbath, Creed, the Deftones, and Silverchair.
(cd.co.za/legends/2000plus/saron_gas.html)

**Senyaka:** A South African kwaito artist, Senyaka made his debut on the local music scene in the early 90s with his album *Fuquza*. Shortly after that, however, his music career was put on hold as he battled a drug addiction. In 1999, he regained popularity and commercial success with "Shesha Mpama". His latest offering is a collaboration with DJ Bakstina titled *Payback* (2004).
(http://cd.ciao.co.uk/Productinformation/Payback_Senyaka_DJ_Bakstina__5933356
Sunday Times, 30 Sep 2001.
http://www.suntimes.co.za/2001/09/30/news/cape/nct19.asp)

**Skeem:** A kwaito group formed in the early 90s, consisting of the MCs Ishmael Morabe, Lucky Mach, Rough Theba Shumba and Jacob Mogwatlhe. They released the very successful album, *Waar Was Jy?*, in 1996. The group released three more albums before

splitting up in 2000. The lead vocalist of the group, Ishmael Morabe, has gone on to launch a successful solo career.
(http://www.ghettoruff.co.za/news.aspx?rmnewsid=88)

**Skwatta Kamp:** A South African rap/hip hop group. Their third album, *Mkhukhu Funkshen* (2003), was the first local rap album to go gold in South Africa. Their lyrics deal with local issues, especially with the experience of poverty. Their single "Politics" (2002) drew controversy with its sharp critique of the ANC government.
(MTV, 2005.
http://mtvbase.com/mtvbaseafrica.com/music/article.jhtml?id=30119477)

**Springbok Nude Girls:** One of South Africa's longest running and most successful rock bands, consisting of members Arno Carstens (vocals), Theo Crous (guitars and vocals), Francious Kruger (drums), Arno Blumer (bass) and Adriaan Brand (trumpet and synthesizer). The Nude Girls first attracted critical attention after playing at the Grahamstown Arts Festival in 1995. After releasing their first album, *Neanderthal 1*, they achieved huge popularity among South African audiences and had numerous hits on local charts. They officially disbanded at the end of 2001, but have since then met up for various collaborations. Their music ranges from hard rock to melodic ballads.
(http://www.alternative.co.za/bands/nudegirls.html )

**Stain'd**: This US rock quartet released their debut album, *Tormented*, in 1996. The single "Outside", from their *Family Values Tour 1999* CD, became a number one rock single, while a hit version also appeared on Staind's next album, 2001's *Break The Cycle*. That CD entered the Billboard Top 200 albums chart at number one, and has sold more than eight million albums to date. 2003 saw the release of their album *14 Shades Of Grey*, a CD that marked the band's second number one entry on the Billboard 'Top 200 Album Chart.'
(http://www.staind.com)

**TKZee:** A South African kwaito group, consisting of the members Zwai Bala, Kabelo Mabelane, Tokollo Tshabalala. They first achieved popularity and commercial success with the single, "Palafala", in 1997. Other hits include "Shibobo", which became South Africa's anthem for the 1998 soccer world cup.
(http://www.music.org.za/Artist.asp?ID=120)

**Tree 63 (Tree prior to 2000):** A South African, Durban-based Christian rock band, formed in 1996, who have achieved significant mainstream success in South Africa. They have also built up a following in US on the Christian music scene. They have had number one singles on both the US and Australian Christian Rock Charts. The band has had a

high turnover of musicians, but the one constant has been front man John Ellis, who also writes the band's material.
(http://1cubed.com/display.php?ID=139&sectionID=26).

**Wonderboom:** A South African rock band particularly well known for their energetic stage show. They came into being in 1997 when two existing bands – the Electric Petals and Eight Legged Groove Machine – merged. Wonderboom consists of three members: Wade Williams on bass, Martin "Cito" Otto on vocals and guitar, and Danny de Wet on drums.
(cd.co.za/legends/90s/wonderboom.html)

**Wyatt, Marcus:** A South African jazz trumpeter, Wyatt has a background in both classical and jazz idioms. He has played with many of the big names of the South African scene, including Winston Mankunku, Vusi Mahlasela, and Jimmy Dludlu. He recently spent some time living and collaborating with local musicians in Amsterdam. He has released two solo albums to date.
(http://www.sheer.co.za/marcus.html)

**Yenana, Andile:** A South African jazz pianist who has worked, toured and recorded with various fellow South African artists including Zim Ngqawana, Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi, and Steve Dyer. He names as the styles that have shaped his musical voice Motown, South African jazz, the blues, funk and gospel.
(http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=86)

**Zola (real name Bonginkosi Dlamini):** One of the most popular contemporary South African kwaito stars. He has received critical acclaim for his music, which incorporates socially engaged lyrics and various musical influences from genres such as hip hop and gospel, as well as from traditional Sotho and Zulu styles. He has also achieved commercial success with singles such as "Mdlwebe" and "Don't Cry".
(http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=155)

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