The role of rap performance in reinforcing or challenging participants' perceptions' of 'race' in post-apartheid South Africa, Durban.

Musonda Mabuza Chimba

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

Musonda Mabuza Chimba

Signed: Chimba .

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Abstract

This ethnographic study concerns itself with the role that local rap performance plays in either reinforcing or challenging perceptions of 'race' amongst the participants of hip-hop culture in Durban, South Africa, and what this implies for the prospects of reconciliation. Using Cohen's (1989) theory of community and Grossberg's (1996) theory of affective alliances, I explore the ways in which music may create and maintain differences and commonalities between groups of people. It is my hypothesis that genre conventions and connotations, and the discourses that circulate about rap music (for example, rap music as a form of expression particular to the 'black Atlantic' diaspora and conditioned by a racially segregated society [Rose 1994]), allow hip-hop to either reinforce or challenge participants' perceptions of 'race'. I examine how musical and lyrical utterances thrust into a semantic historical and socio-political context limit how rap performance can mean and how, as a dialogic speech genre, rap can uphold, subvert or negotiate its genre associations, including, through the use of double-voiced discourse, dominant ideas concerning 'race' and cultural identity.

Acknowledging the idiom as of a form of black cultural expression (Rose 1994), interviewees mention narratives of hip-hop's historical origins, rap artists' use of Five Percenter and Black Nationalist ideologies, and poverty, as factors that either reinforce or challenge notions of 'race'. The simultaneous transgression of and/or adherence to, racialized space and spatialized 'race' (Forman 2002) by different 'races', as well as the presence or absence of multilingualism, are viewed as indicators of the level of commitment to the notion of a democratic place for all 'race' and language groups in post-apartheid South Africa. It is the aim of this thesis to add to the body of knowledge concerning the nature of our post-apartheid identities, what influences them and in what way. And in a broader context, to explore the role of music in societies in transition and the role it might play in facilitating an ability to 'imagine culture beyond the colour line' (Gilroy 2000).

Contents page

Chapter 1

Introduction and literature survey _____ **pg 2**

Chapter 2

Theory and methodology _____ **pg 12**

Chapter 3

Presentation and interpretation of interviews _____ **pg 26**

Chapter 4

Reinforcing/ challenging 'race' through genre specific conventions _____ **pg 54**

Chapter 5

Conclusion _____ **pg 66**

Appendix 1 _____ **pg 71**

References _____ **pg 72**

Chapter 1

Introduction and literature survey

Hip-hop culture originated in the formerly middle-class suburbs of the South Bronx in Manhattan, New York in the early seventies. The construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway saw many houses and businesses demolished. This left many black and Hispanic families' homeless and without jobs (Chang 2005:10-18). Hip-hop culture, which includes Mcing, graffitting, breaking and Djing, arose out of these ghettorized conditions (see Chang: 2005) and has consequently been marked as belonging to marginalized poor black youth. Hip-hop has not remained stagnant in its place of origin but has become a global phenomenon appropriated across racial and socio-economic barriers. This study stems from an interest in how both black and white South Africans from varying socio-economic backgrounds who, whilst acknowledging hip-hop as of a form of black cultural expression created by and for disenfranchised youth (Rose 1994), appropriate hip-hop to re-negotiate and re-articulate socio-cultural power and space in post-apartheid South Africa and ultimately, what it means to be the 'rainbow nation'. In this study, I examine how musical and lyrical utterances thrust into a semantic historical and socio-political context limit how rap performance can mean, how rap performance can uphold, undermine or negotiate dominant ideas concerning 'race' and cultural identity.

Apartheid was an official policy of racial segregation that involved political, social and economic discrimination against black people. The advent of democracy ensured the end of discrimination, at least in theory. However, 'race'[1] is still considered a legitimate category with which to classify people[2]. As Ballantine states, "'Races' were assumed to be real, natural entities; thus race thinking remained entrenched, and a non-racial future simply meant that the future would be 'multicultural': at best a co-existence free of racism" (2004:106). Therefore, this thesis examines, first, the contents and contexts of rap performance produced by black and white South African

[1] I use single inverted commas as 'scare' quotes to indicate that I believe that 'race' and the social characteristics ascribed to it are social phenomena rather than a result of biological determination. See Appiah (1993) and Gilroy (2000).

[2] In her study of the perceptions of white adults with regard to the cross-racial adoption of children, Miller (1999) finds that the majority of her participants are not in favor of cross-racial adoption because they believe 'race' is a determining factor with regard to social culture.

rappers in KwaZulu-Natal to find out *how,* through form, structure and conventions and connotations of genre, as well as the discourses surrounding the rap music genre, rap is given meaning. Second, the study examines the degree to which rap performance produced in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, is perceived by black and white performers and audiences as either reinforcing or challenging their perceptions of 'race' in post-apartheid South Africa. Third, this research concerns itself with the participants' perceptions of what this use of rap performance implies for the prospects of reconciliation. It is the aim of this research to add to the body of knowledge concerning the nature of our post-Apartheid identities, what influences them and in what way.

In the present chapter, first, I discuss recent scholarship about 'race' and rap performance; second, I discuss the tensions between local and global hip-hop; finally, I outline the content and themes explored in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Literature survey

'Race' and rap performance: the hip-hop canon

In the following section, I discuss canonical texts on hip-hop, evaluating the manner in which 'race' and rap performance is treated. Much of the literature in question stems from the USA, and as a result most of the literature approaches the issue at hand in a particular manner, responding to the unique dynamics in that country as dictated by the historical, economical, political and socio-cultural environment etc.

1. Black noise: the death of civil rights and the birth of hip-hop

Hip-hop culture sprang up in the ghettos of the South Bronx, populated by impoverished black and Latino people. Naturally, this environment shaped the ideologies, content and actual practices of those involved in the culture.

In her seminal book *Black noise*, Tricia Rose is primarily concerned with black cultural priorities. She "examines the polyvocal languages of rap as the 'black noise' of the late twentieth century" (1994: xiv). Similarly, Boyd argues that hip-hop culture highlights the same social injustices illuminated by the civil rights movement in the

sixties; hip-hop is a continuation of the fight for the civil rights of Black Americans (Boyd 2003). Common to the above mentioned authors, as well as George (1998), Potter (1995), and Perry (2004), is the investigation of the use of rap music in the USA as an art form that expresses the lifestyles, restrictions, aspirations and contradictions of Black and Latino youth.

1.2 ownership and voyeurism

The debate about 'race' and rap music, at least in texts from the USA, tends to pivot around issues of ownership, voyeurism and erasure. This is, I believe, due to the claim that 80 percent of the audience of rap music in the USA consists of middle-class white males. Kitwana (2004: 82) argues that few authors are able to cite a source for this statistic for there has not been a demographic study that substantiates it. He goes on to discuss the often-cited statistics from Soundscan, a company that tracks the sales of records, explaining why those statistics are biased and unreliable. Kitwana argues that in 1991,

> Sound scan was tracking approximately 7,300 retail outlets, mostly chain stores in the suburbs. Before Soundscan, the majority of stores that reported sales were freestanding stores in urban areas. This discrepancy was one of the earliest criticisms of Soundscan– that's its data pool was lopsided to begin with, hence the seeming overnight shift of hip-hop's audience from the hood to the suburbs. (2004:83)

His argument is that statistical studies concerning hip-hop's audience do not take into account other methods of consumption, such as illegal downloading from the internet, and most importantly, mix-tapes. Mix-tapes are used to introduce rap music to the 'streets', to the public. They are used by both unknown and established Mcs, including Mcs signed to major recording companies such as Jay-Z, Eminem and T.I.

George, Boyd and Potter have questioned white involvement in rap music, stating that it is akin to whites' attitude towards blackness, that is, as " a cloak of defiance which can be discarded at any time" (Boyd 2003: 135). George argues that for white middle-class youth, listening to rap music is much like going on safari whilst in the safe

comfort of suburbia. Furthermore, George argues that there is an assumption by white American youth that being involved in hip-hop culture shows political concern and support for black concerns, and is enough to effect social change, this, according to George, is wrong. Billy Wimsatt has also raised concern about the consumption of black culture by white youths without any physical contact with black people (Kitwana 2004:7).

2. Hip-hop's dominant audience: why does it matter who is listening to hip-hop?

With claims that the dominant audience of rap music is white middle-class males, and some authors challenging this claim (Kitwana 2004:82), perhaps the important question should then be: Why does it matter who the dominant audience demographic is?

2.1 Culture bandits: ownership and erasure

In stamping hip-hop as an art form that expresses the lifestyles of black and Latino people (Rose 1994, George 1998, Potter 1995, Perry 2004), despite the fact that rap music has been appropriated by all 'race' groups, it is clear that African-American theorists are concerned about the erasure of hip-hop's black origins, and the erasure of the racialized issues hip-hop addresses. This concern stems from the erasure of rock and roll's black origins (Kitwana 2004: 102), and a strong desire to make sure that this does not happen again. In the USA, the history of music and 'race' has not been confined to linking social and essentialist characteristics, but has included the dispossession of financial freedom through a systematic denial of copyrighted material. With a history fraught with displacement and dispossession, many are wary that history will repeat itself and rap music will be taken away from black people. Holmes-Smith and Fiske explain the reasons for the distrust black people feel towards white Americans:

> Black males have the lowest life expectancy of any group in the United States. Their unemployment rate is more than twice that of white males… The income of employed blacks is about 60% of that of whites (even college educated blacks earn only 75% of their white counterparts)…The physical

> effects of white power are inescapably everywhere, but the discretion of its operations makes the system invisible, except in its effects. For whites, who are largely free of its effects, the invisibility is almost total; for blacks, the struggle is to make visible that which they know is there, to give materiality to the system and its intentionality that approximates that of its effects. (2000: 608-609)

As the "discretion of its operation makes the system invisible", feelings of distrust and paranoia are heightened because seemingly the machinations of white power are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

The discussion on hip-hop in mainstream media (read 'white') has become serious, and this is seen by Kitwana as a result of the advent of popular white rappers such as Eminem and an increasing white audience. He criticizes this sudden interest in hip-hop, as he believes that mainstream media feels hip-hop culture is a legitimate form of expression now that white people are involved in it. This, he states, gives the perception that hip-hop, and by extension 'black culture', needs to be legitimated by white messiahs.

3. Ethical and effective alliances: the hip-hop voting block

Billy Wimsatt (Kitwana 2004) calls for a responsible involvement in hip-hop by white people. He states:

> I'm horrified by the aspect of the white hip-hop thing where you can be a white hard-core underground hip-hop kid in, say, Minnesota, and not know a single Black person. Their whole social circle is white. Their favourite rappers are white, and they're trying to put out their own CD's, and so on. This is shocking and violently decontextualised from what hip-hop came from and what it's about. (Kitwana 2004:7)

Wimsatt calls for an involvement that understands and strives to challenge the systematic racisms pervasive in American society. He urges white audiences to be involved in hip-hop activism in order to challenge the status quo.

Mercer (in Wald 2000) also questions the ambivalent identifications of the 'white negro', perhaps more importantly, he hints at why this question lingers on in our minds:

> At what point do such identifications result in an imitative masquerade of white ethnicity? At what point do they result in ethical and political alliances? How can we tell the difference? (Wald 2000: 78)

The need for an *ethical* alliance is pressing, and yet, as Mercer asks, can we ever be able to tell what this would comprise? The need for an ethical alliance stems from historical 'alliances' that were less than ethical; the identifications of the white male are rife with othering and exoticizing, and for highlighting the nobility of the white male who would dare to descend into blackness (Wald 2000). Kobena Mercer concludes by stating that white racial passing must not be viewed as a purely colonizing and exploitive desire. He asks, 'Can't fantasies of blackness be acted out whilst simultaneously constructing alliances, and what if the sources of alliance are inevitably impure?' He further states that purity itself is part and parcel of racist ideology (ibid: 80).

Bynoe (2004) questions the ability of raptivists, rappers who dabble with activism, to lobby and deliver real change. She states that "Hip hop culture, as we currently know it cannot adequately foster a political movement" (*2004: x).* Bynoe states that " while rap artists certainly have a role in the movement for racial equality, the work of defining and implementing a political agenda should be left to post-civil rights generation activists, organizers and politicians" (ibid: xii). Whilst Bynoe raises an important point with regard to romanticising conscious social commentary and the assumption that this will lead to substantive change, she seems to have ignored the alliances created by audience members and the passion and optimism (Grossberg 1992:73) that hip-hop stirs in them, as she solely focuses on the rappers' roles. Furthermore, she seems to ignore groups that use celebrities to lobby for the young vote, such as R*ock the vote,* which is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation founded for the purposes of political advocacy (http://www.answers.com). In 2004 Russell Simmons' *Hip-hop Summit* joined forces with *Rock the vote* and helped deliver the

young vote for Presidential nominee, John Kerry, although he didn't win the elections (Paul 2004 para.1). Also, in the 2008 primaries, it was the young voters who were responsible for the victory of black Democratic nominee Barack Obama (Von Drehle 2008 para. 3). Can one attribute Obama's victories to the conscientizing and sensitising genre of hip-hop? No statistical research has been conducted to see whether any of the young people who voted for Obama listen to hip-hop. But can we completely exclude hip-hop as a conscientizing factor? Bynoe agrees with Mercer that there is a need to foster inter-racial coalitions in order to obtain change in the USA. She states that "new leaders must be cognizant with the increasing influence of new immigrant groups, the traditional White-Black race dialectic is no longer feasible; inclusion must be viewed under a new prism" (ibid: *xx*). Are *ethical* alliances more important than affective alliances? As Mercer concludes, it would be impossible to know whether or not hip-hop alliances are always ethical. Therefore perhaps the question should be: Can hip-hop deliver inter-racial coalitions? Can hip-hop provide the framework upon which the interests of black and white South Africans are highlighted?

The global versus the local: locating the debate

1. Writing ourselves

As noted above, in the USA, where rap music originated, the debate about 'race' and hip-hop centres around the ownership of hip-hop culture as *belonging* to black people, and I have briefly mentioned the socio-political dynamics in the USA that might seem to justify this stance. The racial-historical narratives of South Africa and the USA may seem similar, and therefore by extension, one would assume that the nature of the debate around the subject matter would be the same. But as Appiah (1993) argues, the experience of blacks in the New World may very well be quite different to the experiences of blacks in Africa; similarly, the racialized experiences of blacks and whites in the USA may differ from those in South Africa. Hip-hop heads[3] in KwaZulu-Natal operate in different circumstances to those of their world-wide counterparts, circumstances that have been informed by their immediate environment

[3] 'Head' refers to a 'die-hard' fan of hip-hop: someone who is both knowledgeable about and is involved in hip-hop culture.

as mediated by the peculiar experience of apartheid (Watkins 2000), or even the post-apartheid era. Although rap from the USA remains *extremely* influential,

> ...as young people throughout the nation (and the world) encounter hip-hop in all its forms, they quickly adapt it to their own localized patterns and practices, reinventing hip-hop according to entirely contingent and locally relevant logics. (Forman 2002: 24)

Therefore, in this study I question the ways in which South Africans use rap, a genre steeped in American racialized narratives of ways of being and knowing, to negotiate and articulate their post-apartheid identities. I question the extent to which affective qualities, social characteristics and ideals associated with the rap music genre in South Africa, bear traces of the discourses that circulate about rap music in the USA. How do these narratives affect the perceptions of South African youth with regard to 'race' and reconciliation? How are these narratives used in a manner that is consistent with the participants' beliefs?

2. The rainbow is calling!

To my mind, the fundamental issue in the debate about the ownership of hip-hop culture centres around a lack of power and dispossession. The social realities of, and imaginaries about, 'race' and power in South Africa are influenced by widely different dynamics to those in the USA. Despite the fact that social and economic injustices have been carried over from the apartheid regime, the inception of black majority rule gives both black and white people the *perception* that black South Africans have power. As this study will show, most participants state that the mere presence of all 'races' at the *Life-check* hip-hop sessions demonstrates the commitment of all 'races' to the negotiation of social power in South Africa. They state that the presence of all 'races' is the reason they believe things will change for the better. But in fact, the historical effects of racism are stark; poverty, racialized space and the linguistic dominance of the minority negate the idea of real immediate power for all. In this thesis, I also question the reason behind the optimism that hip-hop creates in the participants' minds. What does reconciliation mean and what role do they think rap performance plays in its implementation?

Structure of thesis

Chapter two focuses on the theories used to explore and explain the practices of rap performance in KwaZulu-Natal. In that chapter, I explore the ability of music to either transgress or reinforce boundaries between groups of people (Mattern 1998) and Grossberg's thesis of 'affective and effective alliances' (1996). A localized theory of reconciliation, framed within the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), is also explored in this chapter. I also discuss Bakhtin's thesis of dialogic speech genres and Brackett's idea of genre, which can briefly be described as the discursive practices surrounding particular music making activities.

In chapter three, rap music's historical narrative, social and quasi-religious narratives, racialized poverty, racialized space and the linguistic dominance of the minority are discussed as the broad themes identified by interviewees as those that either reinforce or challenge their perceptions of 'race'.

In chapter four, I present an analysis of rap music identified by the participants as either reinforcing or challenging their perceptions of 'race'. I discuss how songs are interpreted and experienced by audiences, questioning how rap performance may mean in a particular way, whilst simultaneously allowing participants to create new meanings.

In the final chapter, I present my conclusions and suggest further areas of research in this field.

Chapter 2

Theory and methodology

This chapter serves to provide the theoretical framework on which my ethnographic research and analysis of local rap music is based. This section is divided into four parts: first, I discuss the manner in which popular music may create and maintain both commonalities and differences between groups of people; second, I question and discuss the idea of reconciliation, introduced to the South African public during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC); third, drawing on Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and speech genres, and Brackett's notion of genre, I provide a theoretical framework upon which my analysis of how rap music may mean, and consequently serve to create and maintain commonalities and differences by either reinforcing or challenging notions of 'race' amongst groups of people; last, I explain the theories that inform my method with regard to the manner in which the fieldwork was carried out.

Theory

A. Creating and maintaining commonalities and differences through music

1.1 The individual and the communal role of music

The idea that music can create and maintain commonalities and differences is based on the assumption that music is a form of communication, which is the exchange of ideas and feelings from one (or many) to another (or others) with the intention to foster understanding between the concerned parties. "A discussion of the communal role of music must also rest on the recognition that individual identity is partly formed through interaction with a social environment" (Mattern 1996:16). Prior experiences are embodied in the present in the form of memories and meanings that may be recovered and given new life in an act of musical expression (ibid). According to Taylor (2004), identity (the sum of an individual's thoughts, feeling, beliefs and values) can be thought of as that which is in a dialogical relationship with society.

Taylor argues that modes of expression are learnt through interaction with others (2004: 37), and that one's identity is "partly shaped by recognition [of others] or its absence…" (2004:35). Music can be thought of as a symbol of the ideas, feelings, memories and experiences of the artist and audience. As those experiences are socially derived, and thus common to others, it can be said that music is communal by virtue of being a symbol of socially derived experiences. Through music, audiences can relive feelings and memories, rarefy their ideas and selves through the act of listening to or partaking in music performance (Mattern 1996).

1.2. Musical communities: the symbolic construction of community

In this thesis, I draw extensively from Cohen's concept of community. Cohen holds that community is not a structure of institutions capable of objective definition and description (1989:19). It is neither geographically bound nor drawn at the point where differentiation occurs. Rather, it incorporates and encloses differences. A community is a group of people who have something in common with each other that distinguishes them in a significant way from other groups. Community might be experienced as a model for the expression of various interests and aspirations (1989: 107). Although the idea of community is encapsulated in the perception of its boundaries, this boundary between communities is symbolic (1989:13). Symbols are signs that we invest with meaning through the process of articulation. In short, they are without *inherent* meaning. Signs are mutable and open to various interpretations; thus rituals that are characteristic of a community may or may not have the same meaning to members. As Cohen states, community is "a commonality of *forms* (ways of behaving) whose content (meaning) may vary considerably among its members" (ibid: 20); as such, disagreement, conflict and discord exist in the community (I will return to this point in my discussion of how music can serve to create and maintain differences in communities). Conceiving of the hip-hop community in Durban in this way allows us to take into account the divergent interests and meanings ascribed to particular rituals by heads, all the while also acknowledging the importance they afford hip-hop in their lives.

2. Creating and maintaining commonalities and differences through music

An alliance is subordinate to a formation and a sensibility. According to Grossberg, formations are

> A configuration of practices that form a particular structure of unity which transcends any single group's relation to the practices. The configuration allows certain practices to exist and to have the power within its boundaries. For example: the broad notion of a rock culture. (1992:398)

Grossberg argues that the idea of a formation, which is also "a historical articulation, and accumulation or organization of practices" (1992:71), is more helpful than the idea of genre, which necessitates formal elements in order to identify a genre. He argues that this limited conception of genre does not explain how, for example, Tin Pan Alley, R'n B and other styles were articulated to form rock culture. However, I hold, like Walser (1993) and Brackett (2002), that genre, although having those formal elements, is not only constituted by and through those formal elements, but also includes the discursive set of practices surrounding that particular genre and the discourses that circulate about them. Conceived in this way, genre is "a historical articulation, and accumulation or organization of practices" (1992:71). An alliance is subordinate to both a formation and a sensibility, having discussed what a formation is, I shall now discuss what a sensibility is. A sensibility is the logic of articulation that underpins the taste of a particular formation. It defines the attitudes and activities available to the people within that formation. It seems to me that a sensibility is the set of ideologies that inform the values and aesthetics of the formation, as well as what is reified and what is contested in the formation. As in my use of community in this context, due to the symbolic nature of community and the ambiguous nature of symbols, different meanings and importance may be attached to different rituals. As a result, there are conflicts and disagreements with regard to what the dominant sensibility should be and the ideological significance that should be accorded to different beliefs and practices.

Grossberg describes affect as will and mood; it is "the energy invested in particular sites: a description of how and *how much* we care about them" (1992:397) (my italics). An affective alliance is an "articulation of a cultural formation" (ibid), it is the relationship between texts, practices and people. Grossberg states, "every practice transforms the world in some way"; these could include physical, cognitive or economic changes (ibid: 398). "Effectivity describes the particular domains and range of the effects of any practice" (ibid). Grossberg argues that the coherence of affective and effective alliances depends on their affective relationships, and their articulated places within people's mattering maps. A mattering map is, as defined by Grossberg, "a socially determined structure of affect which defines the things that do and can matter to those living within the map" (ibid). The energy invested in a particular music genre, the effects of any practice and the relationships forged within that formation, are based on shared feelings and ideals about the music and practices.

As afore-mentioned, the mutability of symbols allows for different members of the community to ascribe different meanings to rituals, which explains how rituals that are characteristic of a community may or may not have the same meaning to members. Disagreement, conflict and discordance exist within the community, but as the boundary is not drawn at the point of differentiation, such conflicts are contained. In fact, community

> continuously transforms the reality of difference into appearance of similarity with such efficacy that people can still invest the 'community' with ideological integrity. It unites them in their opposition, both to each other, and to those 'outside'. It thereby constitutes, and gives reality to the community's boundaries. (Cohen 1989: 21)

Further more, members do not leave behind other cultural affiliations in joining a particular community. The meaning symbols assume is in dialogue with the meanings from that of other cultural affiliations, thus different meanings may be attributed to different symbols. For example, when asked what he didn't like about the *Life-check* hip-hop sessions, Matt (a white male) stated that hip-hop means different things to different people hence the conflict that sometimes exists. He also pointed out

that participants' other cultural affiliations play a role in the disagreements that sometimes arise.

> **Matt: Ah, I don't like some of the people who are coming. As I said *Bling free* was quite pure in the fact that most people there had the same vision for a fundamental hip-hop, you know? ... There's some cats who are comin' to *Life-check* who are brain-washed by American hip-hop, by *Channel O*[4] hip-hop, it's just a false reality which they've, unfortunately, bought (into), you know, rappers with big egos. Also, different culture plays into this. People bring their cultural values from home into hip-hop so...**
>
> **Musonda: What cultural values do they bring from their homes?**
>
> **Matt: Like patriarchy, I mean, this is a typical Zulu characteristic, as well as other people, but firmly engendered in Zulu culture. And it comes through in hip-hop. America also has this patriarchy in hip-hop, and instead of working towards... ugh, that (patriarchy) is coming through a lot more.**

Music can equally form affective alliances and divisions amongst the people that consume it. As this research project focuses on whether or not rap music reinforces or challenges perceptions of 'race', and what this might mean for the prospects of reconciliation, in the next section I discuss the concept of reconciliation.

B. The rap on reconciliation

With the advent of democracy came the need to bring to book people who were responsible for the horrors perpetrated during apartheid, both in the fight for and against freedom. But how was this to be done without upsetting the very unsettled democracy? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a commission headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whose mandate it was to "bear witness to,

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[4] *Channel O* is a 24 hour music channel.

record and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, reparation and rehabilitation" (http://www.sahistory.org.za).

1. The TRC: its aims and criticisms

The objectives of the TRC included establishing 'the truth' and reconciling the nation. Alexander concurs with Posel's analysis of the Report of the South African Truth Commission, she argues that the report contains 'a *version* of the past which has been actively crafted according to particular strategies of inclusion and exclusion…' (my emphasis) (in Alexander 2002:130). In short, its truth would always be subjective rather than objective, and would be the stories of a very few people in comparison to the number of people that suffered during that era.

One of Alexander's main criticisms of the TRC is that it was a result of the compromise between white nationalists and the African National Congress (ANC) as well as an instrument of the compromise. He cites this as the main reason why the TRC did not undertake an in-depth analysis of the apartheid *system*. The TRC focused solely on gross violations of human rights. Thus the masterminds of apartheid, the academics, the business sector, the judiciary and the mass media were not prosecuted and did not take responsibility for being a part of the system, perpetuating and sustaining it (Alexander 2002:123/8). Alexander supports Cronin who argues that individualizing the responsibility for acts committed was ill conceived as individual acts are related to the collective project (in Alexander 2002:125), and I would argue, were in fact sanctioned by the discourses within society that justified the project. In agreement with Cronin, Posel poses the following question:

> If we don't understand the conditions under which racism was produced, reproduced and intensified in South Africa, taking account of its interconnectedness with other modes of power and inequality such as gender and class, how can we transcend it? (in Alexander 2002:125)

Posel's question leads us on to the issue of reconciliation and that of transcending racism. The fact that 'race' was never deconstructed and assumed to be a legitimate category with which to classify people (Ballantine 2004:106) was indeed part of the

problem. She argues that the TRC failed to deal with racism, providing 'racism' as an answer rather than as a question (Alexander 2002:132). She further argues that racism " is one of the fundamental structural features of the system that spawned the gross violations, [and] guarantees that it [the TRC] cannot become a source of reconciliation..." (Alexander 2002:124).

2. Towards a working definition of 'reconciliation'

Critics of the TRC (Posel and Alexander) state that it was not a well thought out exercise in so far as reconciliation was concerned. I am of the opinion that the lack of a clear definition of what reconciliation would mean for South Africans was perhaps the main problem. As Cronin states, the TRC highlighted the "...potentially dangerous confusion between a religious, indeed Christian, understanding of reconciliation more typically applied to interpersonal relationships, and the more limited, political notion of reconciliation applicable to a democratic society" (Alexander 2002: 125). Some of the participants of this study were not aware of the term or what it meant. As the reader will see, in chapter 5, a few participants had mixed feelings concerning reconciliation; others dismissed it as political jargon that meant little to them and the rest of the population.

The following passage by Njabulo Ndebele sums ups the questions that I believe should have been posed with regard to the idea of reconciliation.

> ...[How] can South Africans reconcile 'the black demand for majority rule [with] white concerns stemming from this demand?' How can the redistribution of resources and opportunities occur without the destruction of the economy? *How can South Africa protect the rights of its white citizens without entrenching the privileges of old?* How can the cultural rights of groups be reconciled with a broader national project? *How is equity possible in the face of continuing disparities in housing, education, income, media control, in the broad cultural and linguistic dominance of a demographic minority?* How is justice possible when perpetrators of terrible crimes and human rights abuses can walk away through amnesty? (Njabulo Ndebele in Alexander 2002:119) (my italics)

The inequalities that still exist in post-apartheid South Africa, such as poverty and the linguistic dominance of the minority, are the very issues cited by the participants as those that hinder attempts at reconciliation because they highlight racial difference.

Grossberg, echoing Deleuze and Guattari, argues that political alliances consist of groups that contain 'microfascisms just waiting to crystallize' (Grossberg 1992:376). He states that in contemporary politics, political alliances must respond to, as well as build themselves upon "the proliferation of social differences, [and] the discourse of otherness…", and understand that "interests are inherent in the experiences of specific identities" (ibid). He argues that this always results in alliances breaking into fragments. The politics of identity depend on the collapse of difference between the self and 'we'. This collapse of difference cannot be fully achieved as

> The project inherent in the very notion of a politics of identity–the attempt to forge unity on top of difference–must always reinstate relations of power within the struggle itself, thus splitting it back into its fragments. (1992: 377)

C Dialogism, the utterance and meaning

1 The utterance and meaning

This research examines how the form and structure of rap music, informed by the discourses that circulate about rap music (for example, rap music as a form of expression particular to the 'black Atlantic' diaspora and conditioned by a racially segregated society [Rose 1994]), limits *how* rap performance can be given meaning. I examine how musical and lyrical utterances thrust into a semantic historical and socio-political context limit how rap performance can mean and how, as a dialogic speech genre, rap can uphold, subvert or negotiate its genre associations, including, through the use of double-voiced discourse, dominant ideas concerning 'race' and cultural identity.

Language and logic provide the material for two (or more) people to enter into a relationship that cannot be found in the material itself (Morson and Emerson

1990:132). In Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, the utterance is a unit in speech communication that cannot be broken off from its preceding links (ibid), and each utterance is different from others, including those that are verbally identical to it, as the context and reason for each utterance are always different. There are two ways in which meaning is derived: first, there is the abstract meaning provided in a dictionary, this is really the *potential* to mean that ascribed meaning; second, there is the contextual meaning (ibid: 127). Utterances are shaped by the 'already-spoken' as well as the 'not-yet-spoken'. The topic, or discourse around the topic, is in effect a third person; it 'does not literally speak to us, but as we speak, it affects us as if it did' (ibid: 137). Earlier utterances–whether hostile or sympathetic, authoritative or feeble, socially and temporally close or distant–shape the content and style of what we say (ibid: 137). When speaking about the 'already-spoken', the speaker's word may merge with or recoil from the 'already-spoken'. In so doing, the speaker's word may continue or alter the shape of the discourse by leaving a trace in the words' semantic layers. This trace creates a 'stylistic aura' that Bakhtin argues is misconceived as the word's 'connotations' (ibid: 139). When a "speaker's word is intoned in such a way as to question the values present in its aura and the presuppositions of its earlier stages, it adds and alters the quality of the word" (Morson and Emerson 1990:139). It is precisely because words 'remember' earlier contexts that the word or stylistic aura can be reaccented and challenged. Meaning therefore, is not infinitely deferred, but can be ascertained in a field of answerability; that of the contexts and the stylistic aura/ genre from which the word emanates.

1. Dialogized heteroglossia, speech genres and musical genre

2.1 Dialogized heteroglossia

Heteroglossia refers to the many speech genres that make up a single language. According to Bakhtin, language is always *languages,* for there are many ways of speaking a language and these reflect the diversity of social values, power and experience. Inherent in each language are the contingent historical, socio-political and economic forces that have made it possible (Morson and Emerson 1990:140). For example, there exist many forms of the English language–such as African-American

English, Ebonics, which grew out of the socio-political and economic experience of African-Americans. An example closer to home would be Tsotsitaal, a combination of Afrikaans, SeSotho and English, which is spoken mostly by location dwellers and is often associated with gangsters. As aforementioned, meaning is ascertained when an utterance is thrust into a contextual semantic field. Connotations are, according to Bakthin, the tones and meanings that the dialogized words attract when they participate in more than one value system (Morson and Emerson 1990:140). An example of dialogized heteroglossia is the term Babylon. Babylon is the city found in the Christian bible that was destroyed as the people of Babylon were 'drunk with their own success' and decided to build a tower that would reach the heavens. Rastafarians use the term Babylon to refer to the capitalist system and how it will or should be destroyed. The word Babylon has attracted meaning by participating in more than one value system, hence, has certain connotations/ tones and meanings. Thus, when hip-hoppers use it, it encapsulates both the meanings in the different value systems of Christians and Rastafarians: that Babylon consists of self involved, satiated capitalists who will or should be destroyed.

2.2 Musical genres

Genres, as described by Brackett, are not only defined by musical style, but by the connotations (the tones and meanings of the words and practices they attract) that they bring with them (Brackett 2002). If 'meaning' is not infinitely deferred, and at the moment of enunciation and/or reception an utterance is projected into a 'field of answerability' (Peterson 1995: 90), and if '[s]emantic phenomena can exist in a concealed form, potentially, and be revealed only in semantic cultural contexts …' (Bakhtin in Peterson 1995:90), then the 'semantic cultural contexts' that allow audiences and performers to give meaning to rap music are the tones and meanings attracted by words and practices, the affective qualities and, social characteristics associated with the music, and the ideals associated with them (Brackett 2002: 66). For example, 'race' as a term means nothing in and of itself, but, thrust into a value system of colonialism and the civil rights movement in the USA, it attracts particular meanings such as inferiority and unequal socio-economic and political opportunities. Various connotations/ tones and meanings form a coherent speech genre through which we navigate in order to ascertain the correct meaning. Another example,

Zionism, refers to the Jewish people's struggle for self determination and a homeland (spiritual and otherwise), but it also participates in more than one value system, as a call for the people of the black diaspora to recognize Ethiopia as their home and a call to fight for their freedom. Thus when Zionism is mentioned within the loci of the hip-hop speech genre, we can assume that it refers to the racial struggle between black and white, rather than Jewish and Other, and the dispossession and dislocation of black people. It is my hypothesis that rap music is able to reinforce or challenge notions of 'race' amongst its participants through the conventions of genre: stereotypes and expectations constitute and are constituted by genre. Thus, when an individual assumption is proved wrong, or a single expectation unfulfilled, the rest of the tones and meanings that make up a genre are then questioned, challenged, negotiated and rendered unstable. This is achieved through Signifiyin(g) or the use of polyphonic discourse.

3. "Signifyin(g): The African American dialogue with Bakhtin" (Peterson 1995)

Elizabeth A. Wheeler suggests a theory of rap music based on Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and popular speech genres (1991). She quotes Gates who states that Signifyin(g), his theory of African American literature and vernacular(s), " is fundamentally related to Bakhtin's definitions of parody and hidden polemic" (1991:196). In rap music, Signifyin(g) is a way of showing respect for, or poking fun at, a musical style, process, or practice through parody, pastiche, humour, tone- or word-play and other troping mechanisms. These troping mechanisms are included in what Bakhtin calls the varieties of polyphonic discourse/double-voiced discourse (Wheeler 1991, Petersen 1995). These are a hidden internal polemic, a polemically coloured autobiography and confession, a discourse with a sideward glance at another's word, a rejoinder in a dialogue, and a hidden dialogue. This project will utilise Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and speech genres to explore how parody and the varieties of polyphonic discourse in rap music may reinforce or challenge associations and connotations of the rap music genre, dominant ideologies, and participants' perceptions of 'race'.

4. Accenting and re-accenting: reinforcing or challenging genre conventions

I take as my starting point that every utterance is already populated with previous utterances; words 'remember' earlier contexts. In a single moment of speech, one is always positioning oneself with regard to previous arguments about that topic. As aforementioned the topic or discourse around the topic is in effect a third person. Therefore, in using a word, "speakers may intone the word so as to question the values present in its aura and the presuppositions of its earlier stages. In other words the word may be 'reaccented'" (Morson and Emerson 1990:139). This then adds and alters the 'already-spoken' quality of the word, and here lies the ability of rap to challenge or reinforce dominant discourses or perceptions. However, as Bakhtin states '[L]anguage is *not* [nor is the utterance] a free medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated–*overpopulated*–with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process' (Peterson 1995: 94) (my italics). Although it is indeed possible for the speaker to deflect and contest the utterance and the intentions of its previous users, to assimilate, rework and re-accent it through parody and the varieties of polyphonic discourse. For example, it is equally possible for the speaker to reinforce the intentions of the utterance's previous users through pastiche or a discourse with a sideward glance at another's word. In rap music, the speaker can contest, challenge and undermine certain notions either through the spoken word, or accompanying sounds; the musical word. The varieties of polyphonic discourse will be fully explored in chapter 4, where, through an analysis of rap lyrics and music, I question whether the issues raised by the participants, such as racialized history, racialized poverty and racialized space, are reinforced or challenged and how this is achieved.

D Methodology

1. The parallax

A parallax is 'the apparent displacement of an observed object due to a change in the position of the observer' (Jameson 2008 para.14). According to Frederic Jameson,

Žižek emphasizes that there are a multiplicity of observational sites, hence there is an 'absolute incommensurability of the resultant descriptions or theories of the object' (ibid). This is in line with the Heisenberg principle, which states that 'the object can never be known, owing to the interference of our own observational system, the insertion of our own point of view and related equipment between ourselves and the reality in question' (ibid para.15). However, Jameson argues that in parallax thinking, the object can be determined, "but only indirectly, by way of a triangulation based on the incommensurability of the observations" (ibid). He further suggests that in research we should "perpetuate the tension and the incommensurability rather than palliating or concealing it" (ibid para. 16). I agree with the notion that there is a multiplicity of observational sites and that one's own point of view interferes in any study. Further more, Peter Metcalf also points out that subjects of study also have their own agendas and that in the process of being observed, they also undergo shifts (Metcalf 2000). With this in mind, the following questions arise: How do I discuss my conclusions with out presenting my work as a finished and final analysis of the issue at hand? How do I perpetuate the tension and incommensurability of the resultant descriptions? The method of my analysis of rap music and lyrics relies on the fact that I am also a fan and a member of the local hip-hop movement. In addition to what the participants of this study think and feel about the music being questioned, I can also provide some explanations as to what the music makes me feel and think. Undertaking this study allowed me to hear the music in a different way and question why the music made me have particular thoughts and feelings. I hope observing the Durban hip-hop scene from these two sites can give particular perspectives on the 'object' under study.

2. Method

Using convenience sampling, I selected fourteen black and white audience members for interview. These were selected at several live performances at the *Life- check* hip-hop sessions. During the in depth interviews, I made an effort to avoid asking questions that lead the interviewees on. For example, I asked participants what they liked about Durban hip-hop or the *Life-check* hip-hop sessions, what the negative aspects of the sessions were, who their favorite local rappers were and why. I found that these questions uncovered dominant themes such as racialized history, racialized

poverty and issues of racialized space and spatialized race. In addition to the audience members, also interviewed were two white male performers, two black female performers and three black male performers. I did not interview any white female rappers–there simply aren't any. Preliminary interviews were conducted to establish the songs and artists that the interviewees thought were relevant to the research topic. Once this was established, I conducted follow up interviews asking more specific questions about how the songs communicate issues of 'race', poverty and space, as these were the dominant themes identified by the interviewees. In representing the views of the participants, I tried to keep the transcriptions as close as possible to what was actually said as I believe this would further exemplify Bakthin's thesis of heteroglossia. Therefore bear in mind that hip-hoppers speak their own language (within a language), which is often a deliberate deviation from Standard English.

In the following chapter, I discuss the participants' opinions on whether or not local rap music and hip-hop shows they attend either challenge or reinforce their perceptions of 'race'.

Chapter 3

Presentation and interpretation of interviews

In this chapter, I present the interviewees' views on whether or not the local rap music and/or hip-hop shows they attend either reinforce or challenge their perceptions of 'race' (An appendix, with the details of the interviewees, is provided on page 71). This section is divided into five main parts: hip-hop's historical narrative, social and quasi-religious narratives, racialized poverty, racialized space and spatialized 'race' and language. These are the issues that have been continuously raised by the participants that either reinforce or undermine their perceptions' of racialized cultural practice in rap music and hip-hop culture, and as such will be interrogated. In this chapter I explore the racialization of hip-hop by looking at the discourses that have surrounded it since its origins. It is by virtue of the racialization of the issues around hip-hop that it is able to reinforce rap as 'race' music, or by the same token, to challenge issues of 'race'.

1. History colours me Black: hip-hop's historical narrative

1.1 Hip-hop's origins: The Bronx and 'race'

Hip-hop culture originated in the early seventies in the formerly middle-class suburbs of the South Bronx in the New York. The construction of the Cross-Bronx Express saw many houses demolished and families left homeless. This left the black and Hispanic population impoverished (Chang 2005:10-18). Hip-hop culture was a response to these conditions experienced by young poor blacks and Hispanics (Whiteley 2004: 8). This is the history of hip-hop's origins that some of the participants of this study are well versed with, hence, the narrative that serves as a benchmark with which to judge and authenticate their expectations and experiences of hip-hop. This is also the narrative that is reified or revised with each appropriation of hip-hop culture.

Tricia Rose firmly situates rap music as the 'black noise' of the eighties and beyond, she states that rap is "committed culturally and emotionally to the pulse, pleasures,

and problems of black urban life ..." (1994: 4). Some interviewees identified with and were drawn to hip-hop because of the perceived link, real and imagined, between rap music, the civil rights movement, anti-apartheid stance, black consciousness and general emancipation of black (and marginalized) people. When asked of his perception of hip-hop, 2gees, a white drummer and member of the multiracial hip-hop band Big Idea responded by stating

> **For me, it's very much based on the lyric. The lyric is important. What we do is the history of hip-hop in terms of the beats itself and all that type of thing, coming from James Brown and that whole era. So it's very much linked with black emancipation as it was, in terms of how...eh... linked to ...subjected to oppression and all through that. Just like jazz and bebop [and] other styles like funk and that started, it's the same in hip-hop. So it's supposed to be very culturally minded, very racially minded. I think it was something that [was] particularly more amongst African-Americans, as it still is overseas... now you've got more white guys coming in.**

Bullet, a black member of rap group Nymphonik Bastards explains why he got involved in hip-hop:

> **... what attracted me to hip hop was the poetry in it. 'Cause I was always a fan of umMzwakhe Mbuli[5]. Now if you understand Eastern Cape, and IZwelitshe and the whole thing that comes [with] that, I mean it's two kilometers away from Ginsberg, and Ginsberg is where Steve Biko used to live. So I'm basically in the hive of Black Consciousness. So with that understanding, that background, the hip-hop and what it was at *Mic- check*[6] ... there was this transformation...We were just glad that I have one two people that relate to this: exchanging cds, exchanging information, exchanging the books that we read, the knowledge that's what it was. ... I was strictly into rugby, so I would do my gym thing in the morning. So I'm**

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[5] Mzwakhe Mbuli is a popular South African poet whose poetry was banned by the apartheid regime. He formally introduced former President Nelson Mandela as the first black president of South Africa at his inaugaration. He was imprisoned for armed robbery in 1996 and released in 2006. He continues to perform, focusing on critical issues such as gender equality and corruption (http://www.mzwakhe.org/).

[6] Before the hip-hop sessions were known as *Life-check,* they were known as *Mic-check.*

free the whole day I'm in the library the whole day reading African history... Chinua Achebe, I don't know who Chinua Achebe is, but these guys from the other end are telling me about African authors. With my people in here, I do not get that. And I'm reading through, reading through and I'm discovering The Last Poets, The Last Poets got their name from Kgotsisile[7] who's a poet from here, I'm thinking "oh my God, it's us, it's us!" We actually inspire them, and them inspire us. The gap is being bridged!'

Lexikon, a female rapper who started out as a poet, also perceives a link between hip-hop culture, marginalized people and socio-political activism. She explains that she became involved in hip-hop as she felt it was a continuation of poetry. Lexikon perceives her involvement in hip-hop as a natural progression of her beliefs, as an extension of her "mattering map" (Grossberg 1992: 398). She states that when she discovered hip-hop, she realized that it was an "already established platform" for the expression of her beliefs and that it invited her:

Musonda: Why did you find it inviting?

Lexikon: Because I felt that here were young people whose eyes had been open to, like, to the social environments around us, to self issues, to like more purposeful uses for sound and music, and [they] had realized the urgency and need for it. Like challenges had always existed although very few people find the need or the urge to do something about it, so, here are people [hip-hoppers] who acknowledged things weren't going the way they should, that certain people hadn't realized that there are wider extensions to life. So I felt that they [hip-hoppers] or us have chosen to live that example, basically in hip-hop that person has freed themselves to express [themselves].

Lexikon feels that participating in hip-hop is synonymous with participating in a liberation struggle from restrictions imposed by society. She also feels that a social activist who is not a fan of hip-hop is still part of the hip-hop movement ("I think that

[7] Professor Keorapetse Kgotsisile is a widely published South African poet.

we, or she, is an Mc" [Lexikon]). 'Lexikon' is derived from 'lexicon', "a list of all the words used in [a] particular language or subject, or a dictionary" (http://dictionary.reference.com). As Lexikon believes that words impart life or death, her desire to be called Lexikon shows her commitment to clarifying meaning as a lexicographer does. In keeping with hip-hop culture, the spelling of her name is not Standard English. Popular culture, according to Grossberg "can be identified with its place in people's affective lives, and its ability to place other practices affectively" (1992: 80). This seems to have been the case with Lexikon as her love of poetry affectively placed hip-hop and its ideological connotations in her "mattering map". Hip-hop makes possible particular commitments and relationships ("like more purposeful uses for sound and music" [Lexikon]), which Grossberg argues provide the potential for political change in that they create optimism, renewed energy and passion for real change (ibid: 73). 2gees, Bullet and Lexikon exemplify how hip-hop can solidify ideological sensibilities amongst people and create affective alliances.

2. Hallelujah! Babylon is falling[8]: social and quasi-religious narratives

" If you don't know, now you know", New York based rapper, Notorious B.I.G.

"The fifth element of hip-hop ... is Knowledge of Self" (Helen Herimbi 2008:6).

2.1. The 5th element: 'doin' the knowledge'

In recent years, 'Knowledge of self' has been accepted as the fifth element of hip-hop in addition to Mcing, Djing, breaking and graffiting (Watkins 2000: 61). 'Knowledge', the act of knowing, is a very important aspect of the philosophies of Five Percenters and other Black Nationalist movements such as Nation of Islam (NOI), Rastafari and Zionism, which hip-hop heavily draws from. Islam, argues Watkins, appeals to many African-Americans as they perceive it is as a form of resistance against Christianity and its association with slavery and white domination (2000: 66). The theme, composition and style of Five Percenter ideology is very similar to that of hip-hop culture: they prize verbal virtuosity as the medium of

[8] This is a title of a song by black Canadian message rapper, K-Os.

imparting knowledge (this is also known as oral catechism) and their ideologies are partly a response to racialized poverty (Miyakawa 2005). The significance of 'knowledge' in Five Percenter rhetoric has influenced its importance in hip-hop culture, as utterances are taken from other 'utterances that are kindred to ours in genre, that is, in theme, composition, or style' (Morson and Emerson 1990:87). In her book about Five Percenter rap, Miyakawa traces the birth of the hip-hop movement locating it side by side with the birth of the Five Percenters. She gives this as the reason the two influence each other. She states that hip-hop Dj Kool Herc recalls Five Percenters taking part in hip-hop parties to guard hip-hoppers against the presence of gang members. Kool Herc states that the Five Percenters were regarded as an integral part of the hip-hop scene (Miyakawa 2005:21). If, as Russell Potter states, "the trope of whiteness is the luxury of not knowing ... it is to see the world through their privilege" (1995: 20), then double-consciousness, "that psyche particular to black and racially oppressed people that has internalized the 'contradiction and 'splitting' of national and racial 'longings'" (Wald 2000:13), is the trope of blackness. In the Bronx, where rap music first found its expression, its practioners were racially marginalized. Therefore, in hip-hop, the act of knowing acts as a double-edged sword: knowing other-than- mainstream ways of being is pursued by the marginalized, the racially marginalized, and, knowing a particular historical narrative of the origins of rap music firmly situates it as a black form of expression, as 'black noise' (Rose 1994). In the following section, I explain the influence of Five Percenter ideology on hip-hop and the reason why Five Percenter ideals are part of the 'authoritative utterances' that have set the tone for hip-hop.

2.2 Five Percenters

"Hip-hop ideology is informed by Islam and the social status of its members" (Watkins 2000:65)

The Five Percenters are a splinter group of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Black Nationalist groups have provided, and continue to provide, a self-affirming episteme that challenges mainstream ways of being and knowing. The following is an extract from the *Lost-Found Lesson no.2*, questions 14 through 16 that teach some of the beliefs of the Five Percenters.

> 14. Who are the 85 percent? The uncivilized people; poison animal eaters; slaves from mental death and power; people who do not know who the Living God is, or their origin in this world who worship that direction but are hard to lead in the right direction.
> 15. Who are the 10 percent? The rich slave-makers of the poor, who teach the poor lies to believe: that the Almighty, True and Living God is a spook and cannot be seen by the physical eye; otherwise known as the bloodsuckers of the poor.
> 16. Who are the 5 percent? They are the poor righteous teachers who do not believe in the teachings of the 10 percent and are all-wise and know who the Living God is and teach that the Living God is the Son of Man, the Supreme Being, of the Black Man of Asia, and teach Freedom, Justice and Equality to all the human family of the planet Earth; otherwise known as civilized people, also as Muslims and Muslim Sons. (Miyakawa 2005: 28)

Five Percenters' doctrines consist of "...an idiosyncratic mix of black nationalist rhetoric, Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) symbolism, Gnosticism, Masonic mysticism, and esoteric numerology..." (Miyakawa 2005: 23). The Science of Supreme Mathematics is used to teach 'how to break down and form profound relationships between significant experiences within life' (ibid 25) and one is expected to live by these ten basic tenets of which *knowledge* is the first[9]. An example of the use of the Science of Supreme Mathematics: a woman has a womb, which is in the form of a circle, and it gives life. The circular shape and the number zero, referred to as a cipher, therefore, mean 'life giving' which is considered sacred (Badu 1997). Street rappers form a cipher when they freestyle and battle, named after the circular shape that Five Percenters form when they teach one another informally. Therefore, when one partakes in street rap, one is partaking in a sacred 'ritual' that is life giving. Utilizing the Science of Supreme Mathematics allows Five Percenters to create meaning that is consistent with their beliefs. Five Percenters valorize the act of knowing as a tool of power against oppression. Thus it is not unusual that utterances from Five Percenter

[9] The second being wisdom, the third, understanding, the fourth, culture or freedom, the fifth, power or refinement, the sixth, equality, the seventh, God, the eighth, Build–Destroy, the ninth, Born, and the tenth , or rather zero, as the cycle begins again after nine, cipher.

doctrines are found in rap music that is not recorded by Five Percenter rappers. Being knowledgeable about particular narratives of the origins and kindred utterances of hip-hop such as Black Nationalist groups makes possible the necessary act of writing oneself, a black self, into history.

God-hop (as Five Percenter rap is known) is regarded as message rap as it deals with socio-political and religious and/or racial issues. Local rappers aspire to have their music regarded as conscious rap or message rap. The appeal of message rap is that it authenticates by virtue of placing a local rapper in direct opposition to mainstream or 'glossy' rap music, which is considered to be untruthful and commercial. Being 'real' is valued over fakeness, which is often equated with commercialism. Black Moss states that "if my truth makes money, good for me. But if my truth doesn't make money, I mustn't change my truth for a lesser truth just so I make money". The doctrines and utterances of Five Percenters have become authoritative, and as such are referred to and cited and have "set the tone-artistic...[they have become] works on which one relies, to which one refers, which are cited, imitated, and followed..." (Peterson 1995: 88) and they validate and authenticate local rap music by placing it side-by-side with other 'real'/ conscious rap music.

The following is an excerpt from a song titled *INC Operation* by Talk Sick, found in 'Life-check lessons' mix-tape, the first official mix-tape released by the organizers of *Life-check.* In it, Talk Sick uses Five Percenter ideologies to question the need for formal education for black people, stating that mainstream knowledge does not benefit black people in the real world.

> ...the destination is set/ we just determine the steps/ attain the type of hunger that might lead us to start eating ourselves/ 'cause they need us here working for them/ give us bad options as life's choices/ not scholastically challenged but I challenge the scholars/ experience verses pen and paper/ knowledge verses education/ ...no matter how educated you might be/ you're a kaffir[10]/ and a kaffir is a kaffir...

The next song on the mix-tape is *Silver black*, performed by Black Moss and Arnold. In the following excerpt, Black Moss utilizes Five Percenter rhetoric to challenge the

[10] 'Kaffir' is a derogatory term used to refer to black people it is the equivalent of the term 'Nigger'.

very ideology Five Percenters promote. In the song, Black Moss describes his attitude and mission as a born-again Christian and black rapper. Black Moss's personal beliefs are in direct contrast with those of Five Percenters. Despite this, he uses Five Percenter methods, such as the Science of Supreme Mathematics and Alphabets, to dispel their beliefs that the black man is God and that the truth cannot be found in Christian texts (see Miyakawa 2005).

> ...black consciousness/ the situation that we working with/ I'm proud of this melanin/ that's why you see me working with/ one or two rhymes 'cause I wanted to rhyme/ something factual and actual it's all in due time/ I'm Black to the capital/ M to the capital/ O to the capital/ double s yes/ so mathematical the truth is acceptable/ the source is God/ sub with a capital/ I live my life, imagine life, my food as the lyrics/ put my God in His magnifier furnace of the spirit/ I get my inspiration from the element of truth/ 'cause I realize the importance of sticking to your roots.

Through word play, Black Moss successfully challenges the doctrines of Five Percenters. In so doing, he appropriates and *re-accents* their words through the use of what Bakthin terms "unidirectional passive double-voiced words". These occur when the author makes use " ...of someone else's discourse for his own purposes by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, and intention of its own" (Morson and Emerson 1990:150).

2.3 Ambiguities of appropriation: challenging racialized cultural practice through 'doin' the knowledge'

In exploring the ways in which listeners negotiate boundaries between self and other, Robertson focuses on the relationship between individual agency and dominant discourses. She concludes that listeners negotiate boundaries between self and other by reflecting on, amongst other things, the dominant discourses versus their real life experiences (2005: 161). There are also hip-hoppers who 'do the knowledge' and appropriate Five Percenter rhetoric with different ends in mind. They compare their lived experience with Five Percenter rhetoric, and acknowledge that Five Percenter ideals are, in fact, incorrect.

Black Moss: I'm just, it's not that I don't care about race, but I just don't, it's not a factor that makes me treat people in a certain, different way. So when I hear music that says 'white people this' or, I just take it as, "you good at putting your experiences down on paper". I look at the way they put it down you know? But I don't turn around and say, "you know what, because of what Tupac says, 'pull a trigger kill a nigger/ he's a hero' all cops are like that", I don't do that, it's lame! 'Cause I'm not experiencing that. I mean a lot of people, I think that actually that is what I need to say that, that is where hip-hop could hinder [attempts at reconciliation]. The audience itself, it's the way you put it down on paper, you know like, if I say to you, all white cops are like this, there's a danger in that my audience will perceive it in a certain and act in a certain way. Like the 'Pac song *Changes*, I'm sure you've heard it: 'Cops don't give a damn about a negro/ pull a trigger/ kill a nigger/ he's a hero'. You know, then people might start thinking, "yo, eF tha police". ...Ya, Tupac went through some hard times, joined the Black Panthers, you know, but I'm just not Tupac. So I must draw inspiration from how he told his story, but I'm not gonna live his life. I mean there are some people who make that mistake. You see them around campus all the time ...like 'you know the Black Panthers? Do you know what the Black Panthers were?' They walk around like activists for the cause of Tupac or whatever!

Musonda: You don't think it's for their own cause?

Black Moss: They just need an escape, yo, whatever, they need a hero.

During the 2006 Durban International Poetry festival[11], among the panelists of a discussion on slam poetry, Ewok, a white rapper and slam poet, stressed the importance of 'doin' the knowledge' 'for real'. Ewok argued that those who thought hip-hop culture didn't necessarily provide a platform for females and white people should learn about hip-hop's origins. He stressed that 'doin' the knowledge' was an integral aspect of hip-hop, that one had to acknowledge that the first Mcs were

[11] An annual poetry festival held in Durban. This particular discussion was held at the Bat Centre.

females (such as Sha Rock), that Latinos played a big role in the development of B-boying, and that white people played an important role in the dissemination of hip-hop.

In these two examples, Black Moss and Ewok utilize the idea of 'doin' the knowledge' for their own ends, rather than the purposes intended by its originators; that of depicting white men as devils and black men as Gods.

3. Racialized poverty

> Hip-hop was an alternative culture last time I looked. Now all of a sudden it's like … an identity of consumerism, bullshit! Hip-hop was always about ghetto, it was always about having a shit life and making the best out of it and sharing that with everyone else…(Daniel, a white producer)

3.1 Place of origin, space of poverty

The ghetto, or 'hood, as Murray Forman (2002) states, is the place (and space) that is the 'home' location of hip-hop. He argues that it is also the space that is sought after for recreation in rap music by producers and rappers. Forman argues that *The message*[12], performed by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious five in the early seventies, firmly placed rap music in a particular place and space. *The message* chronicles the hardships one experiences in the 'hood, the 'ghetto ills,' as a result of poverty. The accepted narrative of the 'hood as the home location of all things hip-hop and the privileged status accorded to the 'hood, was exemplified by participants from wealthy areas in Durban, such as Umhlanga Rocks, who joked about how they were from " the 'hood". Cindy, a black female audience member, states " I'm from the 'hood man! The Umhlanga neighbourhood!" and Chev, a black male audience member, states "[I'm from] Durban north, Glen Hills. Dangerous, *dangerous* part of town (laughs)!" In joking about this subject, these upper middle-class black youths acknowledge the 'already-spoken', the already prescribed space of rap music: impoverished, hence dangerous neighbourhoods.

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[12] *The message* created a new sub-genre of rap music whose content consists of socio- politically and racially aware lyrics. The sub-genre is named after the title of the song.

3.2 'Race' as class

Bahle, a black teenager believes that poverty should be the primary subject of rap music.

> **Bahle: [Rap] should address issues that everyday people have to deal with. 'Cause they are the majority, if you going to concentrate on the minority ...**
>
> **Musonda: Who is the majority or minority?**
>
> **Bahle: The majority of today they basically face the real thing. The minority is like those loaded people with money who don't have to worry about a thing. And now you get everyday people. Not that you have to catch a taxi or bus, but you can afford that maybe a house in Sandton[13] and still, uh, not in the higher class.**

Cindy insists that being at *Life-check* allows her to be herself, but she admits that she gets "ripped off" for being well off.

> **... you meet people from *eloxion* [the location], the suburbs, right? That kinda thing. And yet sometimes you get like ripped off about it 'ooh you from like the upper classes!'**

When asked to identify that which leads him to think of 'race' when engaging with local South African rap music, Flash, a black producer who has worked closely with Daniel, states

> **...the reason why it sorta feels odd when a white person raps... is that I know that white people have generally... been living it good and stuff, and what I know about hip-hop is that it was a form of...people talking about**

[13] Sandton is a wealthy area in Johannesburg.

situations that were happenin' to them. Especially situations that were concerned with struggling and all that stuff, so that's why when I hear a

white person rappin', talking about maybe similar issues, or not even similar issues, I sometimes don't even listen to what his sayin' because it's like automatically, "you know this guys always had it good, he doesn't know what he's talking about".

Black Moss also identified chronicles of poverty in rap music as reinforcing his perceptions of 'race'. He refers to a song by Skye, a black female rapper based in Durban. In the song, he states, "... a chick, like a girl, gets put down in a neighbourhood 'cause she wants a nice life... but it comes across like, wow, that poverty is actually like a consequence of Apartheid." Black Moss then goes on to quote a verse from a song called 'Kimberley[14] rise' written by Proverb, a rapper based in Johannesburg:

> I'm from a city that's hot/ it's not a whole lot/ no jobs/ people of my age just chillin' at the robots/ they know not/ what to do with their lives/ like you and I/ they'd rather choose to die/ by committing suicide.

Black Moss goes on to say:

I think ... why are these people in that place? And then you think about the general picture in South Africa, a lot of people are homeless, but who are these people? You just picture a black person. I mean if I say 'hobo' you're not gonna picture a white person. I don't know, I don't...Then somehow, it triggers back to, "oh some of the effects of Apartheid".

Bullet identified with hip-hop because of his financial struggles as compared to his schoolmates who had cars, were well off and white.

... the person that really could have inspired me would have been Tupac Shakur, only because in terms of rappin', that's what I used to play right? I'm a black guy, they had this quota, I was this quota [in rugby], each

[14] A diamond mining town.

> **time I have to prove myself that I'm worthy, you figure what I'm saying. So now, my only reference, my confidence came from my own struggle, I don't have mommy and daddy to pick me up after the practice. After the practices there are no busses, I have to walk all the way from Glenwood High 'cause we used to stay at Albert Park, walking doing the stuff [rapping]. That was sort of my everyday routine.**

Apartheid had the effect of racializing poverty, and in the beginning, as Whiteley states, rap music was the expression of racialized poverty (2004:8). Rap music chronicles the everyday experience of the 'hood, which is always and already racialized.

3.3 Elemental practices and economic disparities

All participants mentioned that the *Life-check* sessions were positive as it brought all 'races' together. Also mentioned was the fact that, even though all 'races' were present, there was minimal or no interaction between them. When questioned on why they thought that was, the participants mentioned that certain 'races' seemed to gravitate to particular elements because of economic differences. Jerome, a black audience member, states that *Bling Free* was an 'all-white' event because graffiting and Djing were the dominant elements, which white people dominate.

> **Jerome: I don't know if I have to mention this, but it's logical. A lot of black people don't have the finances to buy turntables and be good at what they do, so they good with their words, they have to be. White guys they do have the finances to buy turntables and get the internet to check how to actually learn from that and go forward, they do have that, and they do have money for cans [spray cans] as well. I don't think that the race thing is large, it shouldn't be... Ok, it's that the Djs will be white, the break-dancers will probably be coloured, and the Mcs will definitely be black and the graffiti will be white. There'll be like segregation because of how it is... I try to scratch, but I don't have turntables at my house and I have to visit a friend ... there's race into that, he's a white guy, he has turntables, but the race thing doesn't matter to me.**

Musonda: So it's a matter of economics?

Jerome: With regard to the race thing? In hip-hop we need tables, it's mostly the white guys that's gonna buy turntables, or we need cans, mostly it's gonna be the white guys who gonna speak to the factory guys, ok say, "I have four grand so we want them for three grand", so it's more the white guys into that, into the finance thing of hip-hop. That's probably the truth about [it]. The creativity part, everyone is involved.

Matt, a white audience member and former organizer of *Life-check,* echoes Jerome's views about segregation within the elements:

Eh, well the only one is Djing, but that's economic... Yah, look at the best Djs in the country are black and that kind of thing. In Durban, most of the Djs are white, but that's only because of economic constraints. Yeah, look, most of the Djs are rich kids, so, I don't think it's a race thing, the colour of your skin is not much, it's not much at all... there's no division of race in any of the elements. Maybe graff' there's more white kids, but no so much, there's a lot of coloured kids doin' it now... But also you've got to have money to buy paints, why do you think white middle-class kids are doin' it? 'Cause they got money to buy paints. Like why do you think someone living in the location is not doin' it? 'Cause ay, you've got to worry about eating.

During an interview with Cindy and Chev, Chev reiterated the lack of particular 'races' in particular elements, although Cindy disagreed with him.

Musonda: Some people I've interviewed talk about all types of 'races', but minimal interaction...

(Cindy: I beg to differ)

Chev: That's only because usually the cats that graff' are usually the guys who can afford to graff', that's usually the suburban cats. So that'll be your mixture of your white boys, you know what I mean? The cats that rap will be usually your location cats, you know, from *eloxion* .

Sherrie, a white female who dabbles in graffiti, reluctantly mentioned the segregation that exists in the elements:

Sherrie: Yah, well basically I just think it's like a separation between your graff' artists, your rappers, your break-dancers. Everyone goes into their own little mission.

Musonda: Do you think that's because they're into the elements?

Sherrie: I think it's something else. I actually think because of the elements ... uh I don't know. I've seen a couple of things go down here, between, let's say your black guys and your white guys, like you need to prove something? Ahh! I don't know...it happens, nothing you can't get through I suppose. They have their fights; break bottles over each other's heads and fight.

Sherrie, Jason and Marco (white graffiti artists) stated that they have witnessed a fight between coloured and white graffiti artists. Reluctantly, they recounted the order of events: one of the coloured graffiti artists didn't have some spray cans and took some cans belonging to a white graffiti artist without asking. When questioned on his behaviour, he stated that the white graffiti artist was rich and that he was poor, therefore it was his right to take the cans. This led to the other artists joining in the fight. Jason and Marco were not willing to speak about this fight on-the-record. They felt that putting the fight on record would give the impression to outsiders that the two parties cannot get along, and that it would undermine the camaraderie that exists between the 'races' at the *Life-check* sessions. However, I decided to put it on record for two reasons; first, to highlight the severity of the tensions with regard to 'race' as class; second, to show the commitment of the participants to the idea of a 'rainbow' gathering.

3.4 Business as usual: Hip-hop and ownership

George (1998), Kitwana (2004) and Rose (1994) all point out the fact that although the producers and artists involved in rap music are black, the executives, who run and own big recording and distribution companies and receive more capital from hip-hop are white. Precision, a black Dj, echoed the above-mentioned sentiment. He states that that the fact that the *Life-check* sessions are run by white people reinforces the hierarchy that is experienced in the 'real' world, which reinforces his and others' perceptions of 'race' and racism.

> **... the black African cats, a lot of the time when we speak about *Life-check* they might have issues with it. Such as, "it's a shame that it's these white dudes that are throwing events that bring everyone together and it's them that are pushing hip-hop"... and somehow, the thing is that at *Life-check* it's mainly like African cats, they are more than the white guys. It seems like it's a... what ever man, it's just... pssh, it feels kind of like awkward for them to be like, for them to be creating a platform that attracts more black people. You know when something is white owned but it's for the black market, it just seems like we're buying into them and it's the same form of slavery, new age what ever, back track type of thing. So a lot of cats have issues with that ... 'Cause they gonna feel like shit man, it's white people, and they reaching out to black kids, our kids, through our music basically...**

It is the tag of ownership that allows Precision to equate financial empires that are built on the back of black labour, profiting a few white men through the way in which L*ife-check* is run.

4 Racialized space, spatialized 'race'

4.1 Music, space and place

The relationship between music, space and place overlaps and intertwines (Whiteley, Bennet and Hawkins 2004: 2); music authors space as much as space authors music (see Forman 2002). Lefebvre's conception of space and Forman's analysis of the relationship between rap performance and 'race', space and place are helpful with regard to understanding what role space and place play in the production, dissemination and consumption of music, and how space can simultaneously be adhered to and transgressed.

According to Lefebvre, there are three levels of space. Physical space refers to physical structures or particular locations. Conceived space or mental space refers to ideas or signs about space. Representational or lived space refers to how that particular space is experienced physically, emotionally, intellectually or ideologically (Sanga 2006: 180). These levels of space intertwine and influence one another. In order to demonstrate the interaction of the spatial trialectics, Sanga gives an example of a nightclub, a physical space, being converted into a church. Sanga argues that the physical space, that is, the building itself, does not change, but rather the mental space of the owner changes: there is a desire or an *idea* to utilize the building for lived space, for worship, that is, to engage emotionally and ideologically in a particular manner in that space (2006:183).

As a genre, hip-hop is defined by both its musical style, as well as the connotations it brings with it. These connotations include space and place, affective qualities such as 'rebelliousness', social characteristics such as 'race', as well as social and ideological connotations associated with the above (Brackett 2002). The above-mentioned affective qualities are the combination of ideas (mental space) we have about physical spaces, and the experiences acquired in those spaces, lived space. Street names and neighborhoods map out "...distinct [cultural] and differential qualities along a spatial axis encompassing race and class" (Forman 2002:2), or even 'race' as class. Affective qualities, social characteristics and ideals associated with hip-hop occur within the dimensions of space.

> Music, then, plays a significant part in the way that individuals author space, musical texts being creatively combined with local knowledges and sensibilities in ways that tell particular stories about the local, and impose collectively defined meanings and significance on space. (Whiteley et al 2005: 3)

Segregation ideology and the Pass laws restricting the movement of black people during apartheid ensured that black people could only be in specific places at specific times. This led to the creation of locations that lacked and continue to lack investment in terms of infrastructure and businesses. Ideas about space (mental space) and its governance had particular effects on physical space and the way that space was and is experienced, such as the lack of education, unemployment, crime and health hazards (poor sewerage facilities, the presence of rodents, etc). The result is that both black and white people associate those social and physical effects with that place, the location. This in turn affects where hip-hoppers choose to go (physical space) because of what they think is in that place (mental space) and what they expect to experience in that space (lived space). When asked why he thinks white hip-hoppers don't go to shows in the location, Matt states, "they're scared!" He explains:

> **There [are] some events that are organized by what's his name? That guy that's always walkin' around with the duku[15], ehm, he lectures in Umlazi[16], really really nice guy, he was also organizing some events in Umlazi and this kind of thin'. I remember we were all gonna go once but it fell through, it's a big thing for middle-class white boys to go to Umlazi at night you know, to a place they don't know. I mean town is safe, well at least relatively safe, at least you know what's cutting, but if you're goin' that side, people feel, I'm sure people feel intimidated.**

Bullet also states that hip-hoppers, regardless of what 'race' they are, do not attend most hip-hop shows because of *where* they are held. He states that overcoming ideas about certain spaces would go a long way with aiding nation building:

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[15] A head wrap.
[16] Umlazi is a 'black' township (Location)

> **... it's basically the support, you know, on every head. 'Cause there's other shows that happen in Claremont[17], we need to ...be at the Claremont ones as well. ... We have to be real to our culture and be able to oppose these stereotypes. Because there are no boundaries, but the boundaries are there in our minds. Like, ok, it's "the township is this, the township is that", whatever, whatever! I'm not any better for I think I went there once and I'm not proud to say that. I think I would have loved, to, for us, the guys you see at *Life-check*, you know to come to the township. So people get to see that, "ok, here's something".**

On the other hand, 2gees of Big Idea states that his involvement in hip-hop has exposed and allowed him to go to locations he previously thought of as no go areas:

> **. ... And Wentworth, this [has] a particular stigma attached to it ... and there's still a stigma attached to it. You actually go to KwaMashu[18], you actually go to Wentworth, [and] you realize like, "hey, what's all the fuss about?"**

I will now turn my attention to the venues where hip-hop shows are held, exploring how these spaces are either transgressed or adhered to.

4.2. Venues

Anna, a white female fan originally from Bulgaria, notes the minimal number of white people at *Life-check*. She is of the opinion that white people do not show up unless they actually partake in one or more of the elements of hip-hop. Another reason she gives for the minimal attendance of white people is the venue:

> **Anna: I think it's also 'cause of the venue. The venue plays a big part in hip-hop. Like if it's not nice, like when we had it at Albert Park, it was**

[17] A 'black' township (a 'location').
[18] KwaMashu is the biggest location in KwaZulu-Natal, previously reserved for black people.

really small. Now that we're back at the Bat Centre, it's big again...'cause some venues for hip-hop, mainly the venues are very...dodgy.

Musonda: And it's an issue of what? Safety?

Anna M: Yes, I mean you always here about people getting robbed and stuff, and nobody likes to get robbed. Like when we had it at Albert Park, the only reason I went to Albert Park was 'cause I had a lift.

Musonda: And if you didn't have a lift?

Anna M: I still would have gone, it's 'cause I love hip-hop. But I don't think anybody else would have gone. 'Cause all of the white people that come here have cars. You'll never catch a white person catching a bus, catching a taxi[19] down here. Most of them do drive, or if they live in the area, otherwise they wouldn't come down at all.

Matt explains the lack of white hip-hoppers at particular venues in the *urban* areas:

You talking about these things that Papercut[20] is doing at Skye bar: *Exactly!* Like I said, most hip-hop is this: most white hip-hop listeners are middle-class who have access to good hip-hop like, Skye bar? Do I look like someone who would go to Skye bar? Do graffiti [artists] look like ... [they would] go to Skye bar and hear somebody playing fucken commercial hip-hop? In a commercial club, in a commercial environment, with a whole lot of cats who think that they're in a Jay-Z video, and listen to a few bad Mcs? It's obvious why they're not gonna be there, I mean, it's gonna happen to any educated hip-hopper. *It's obvious!* You can't say it's got anything to do with colour, like because it clearly doesn't. And if people throw good events, then people will be there. A lot of these so-called white hip-hoppers don't even come to *Life- check*, some of them are coming now, like slowly. ... But you'll get some cats who go

[19] 'Taxis' are not cabs (private cars) but mini-buses that sit 15 adults.
[20] A coloured male DJ

there just to support, like Ewok, even if they know it's shit, they just go there just to support.

Dj Precision also discussed the spatial politics in Durban. He argued that white hip-hop heads do not attend venues hosted by black organisers if they are hleld at places perceived as 'black venues', where as black hip-hop heads attend events hosted at 'white venues'.

Musonda: You go to different venues, you were at Society last night, you were Djing at Skye Bar on Friday and then at *Life-check* on Saturday. Is there a difference?

Precision: Oh yeah, there is a difference. I mean you look at the turn out from yesterday [at Society] in comparison to the turn out that you get at Skye Bar, obviously there's a difference. Obviously at Society it's not a, I think maybe that could be like the venue and just the type of culture the venue has, 'cause Skye Bar attracts a lot of black people now because of the whole house music thing... Even when they have hip-hop, they solely attract a lot of black people. I don't see a lot of white people going in there even if there's hip-hop, because it's sort of, it's built a rep' [reputation] of being sort of a black club, through the house events they normally have. So immediately when you have hip-hop you're gonna have a black turn out.

Musonda: The white guys that go to other hip-hop show won't pitch up?

Precision: They won't pitch up. In fact that's another issue. That's another underlying issue ... like a lot of people support *Life-check* and most of the people that, most of the black people that will go to *Life-check* will also go to other hip-hop events you know, then you won't necessarily see the white folk that are at *Life-check* at other hip-hop events, but meanwhile the black dudes are still there at *Life-check*, and it happens. So why are we supporting that movement on a whole? And why aren't they supporting our movements when we have hip-hop set ups elsewhere? So

> **that's another issue. I think it also could be like a venue ideology type shit, like Skye Bar is mainly like black and Society is mainly white … I don't know, I think it's more than just music. I think there is a whole mentality grooming since the day. Obviously, this is our space, Durban is our space: We [black people] are more. I'd be more comfortable going to a white place than a white single [would be going to a 'black place'], and I'd be more comfortable as the only [black] person in a white club. 'Cause I know as soon as I step out geez! There's like ten more black people.**

4.3. Spaces within spaces: Adherence to or transgression of racialized space

Life-check is experienced as a racialized space and/or a racially-contested space: people of all 'race' groups are present, and yet segregation between the different 'race' groups is evident. Interviewees affirmed rap's positive role in social transformation because of the perceived transgressions of racialized space. When questioned about how the *Life-check* sessions help her think beyond 'race', Lerato, a black female rapper and poet, stated:

> **It helps to show that we have conquered some of Apartheid. I mean there is still racism in the world. It shows that none of us are using it against another person. It shows that people are also interested in what used to be called the black culture. 'Cause hip-hop, back in the days was all about the black Mcs, you had *bo* Varste [Varste and company who] were black. Now you come up into the scene you have Raheem, he's Muslim, well he was Muslim, we've got Ewok, Ewok is white. It shows that we all, it brings us all together. It's a means of us coming together and saying "ok fuck apartheid, we're here because we enjoy the same music and we like what it's saying to us".**

However, most participants also mentioned that within that space, there is an adherence to racialized boundaries:

> **Do I think *Life-check* in itself plays a role [In bringing people together]? I think it does. I mean, it's evident. Evident because they're there [people of**

> **all 'races']. The only thing, my only issue with life check is that people can be there, but not necessarily clearly interact. That's the only issue. At the moment I see people, but I don't see people necessarily sitting together and grabbing beers together and having a laugh together. It's sort of like there's an issue behind the closet.** (Dj Precision)

Within the venue, there is segregation: Djing and graffiting are seen as white practices, Mcing is seen as a black practice and B-boying is the only element said to have all 'race' groups as participants. In the 'racialized poverty' section above, I discussed how segregation amongst the elements is a result of economic differences between black and white.

5. Language

" In South Africa, as with other multilingual societies, 'language' is a bitterly politicized sphere…". (Ramanna 2005: 215)

Musonda: What's up with the vernac'?

Siyamatic: Nah, it's just vernac', they always say "vernac, stay black", or is it "stay black, vernac".

Colonial languages represent and have come to represent, amongst other things, the loss of economic power, as conducting trade in a foreign language and a legalistic speech genre that was little or not understood at all resulted in economic losses, including the loss of land, a marker of wealth. Hence, an astute command of the colonial language was essential if one was to converse and negotiate with those who wielded economic and political power, and thereby enrich oneself. Language is experienced by all as an occupied zone, socially and historically marked by class (Peterson 1995:97), and certainly experienced by the formerly colonized as marked by class *and* 'race'. Colonial history, apartheid and the lived experience of the everyday in post-apartheid South Africa lend further coherence to the idea that language is inherently political, always and already imbued with the dynamics of power. Hence, ones' use of language betrays a position marked out by 'race' and class.

Matt stated that Mcs and members of the audience at the *Life-check* would often complain about the lack of vernacular rappers. The complainants felt that vernacular rappers were prevented from performing despite the fact, as Matt argues, that if one wanted to perform, one had to come to the show early and sign up. Matt complains that the preoccupation with the vernacular caused unnecessary tension:

> **Matt: In Durban it's these, I don't even remember what they call them selves, colloquial rapper, or linguistic what is it, when you rap in Zulu?**
>
> **Musonda: Vernac'.**
>
> **Matt: Vernac', vernac', yah; vernacular rappers, see, I don't even care. People must rap in whatever language they speak...People just complain for no reason...**

Tony Mitchell notes that the use of the vernacular in rap music is a "deliberate strategy to combat the colonial hegemony of the English language" (Mitchell 2000:119). Likewise, Potter argues that the use of "spectacular vernaculars" in rap music from the USA is an attempt by rappers to appropriate and over populate language with, in Gilroy's term, 'the unassailable fact of their [black people's] survival' (Mitchell 1996:26). Speaking on the reasons reconstructionist projects are embedded in sociolinguistic variables, Hazel Carby states that 'The struggle within and over language reveals the nature of the structure of social relations and the hierarchy of power...' (in Peterson 1995:97). Siyamatic notes that speaking in vernacular is necessary because people in the locations do not have an adequate understanding of English because of Bantu Education:

> **Siyamatic: ...not that everything you do lyrically has to be in your first language, but, you know there is that somewhere along the way, [in] our communities, the townships that we come from, we also have to put them in the picture you understand? Otherwise they not gonna know what's goin' on, so how can they support what they don't understand? You see, we have to, it's not because of higher learning or anything, it's more**

> **'cause of relating, you have to relate to people. So the vernacular that they use, you need to understand it so that you can communicate with them, that is the only way you will solicit their support. If you're not speaking the same language, they don't understand you. Therefore they don't feel you, see what am saying?**

Flash raps in IsiZulu as well as English. However, he feels forced to rap in English, and he sees this as perpetuating hierarchies of 'race' and class, or 'race' as class. Flash views rap music as a tool that opens a space where views from the margins can be taken into consideration. He feels that reconciliation is only possible if black and white rappers are able to convey their life stories to each other and to the audiences, thus affecting a better understanding of each other's worlds. He views language as a barrier because rappers, like him, whose first language isn't English, are unable to adequately communicate their message to the audiences. He states:

> **...maybe... there's a guy from *eloxion* right, he's rappin' about *ilokishi* [the location] and he's rappin' in English. Now I believe that there's some stuff that he's leaving out...things that people *eloxion* can relate to, that they can understand. So now when he starts rappin' in English, it's like he's catering for people who...[just] don't understand and he's tryin' to convince them to understand. If he really wants to communicate his message and tell about his experience, then it would be only right for him to rap in Zulu, to the majority of people, so that he pulls through. Not to rap in English to people who are listenin', who'll be like, "eish that doesn't make sense".**

Flash sees the use of the English language in rap music as a hindrance to reconciliation for it restricts and limits the space of *confrontation*. If, as Elizabeth Wheeler states, "Like the hip-hop Dj [or rapper], the Bakhtinian novelist brings 'together ideas and worldviews, which in real life were absolutely estranged and deaf to one another, and force(s) them to quarrel'" (Wheeler 1991:196), then the English language, according to Flash, fails to allow this quarrel to happen, at least not in 'real time'. Flash realizes that the use of IsiZulu estranges English speakers and vice versa. He feels that the language used defers attempts at reconciliation as Zulu speakers and

English speakers do not fully understand the others' language, hence cannot fully participate in a much-needed debate. Since Flash had noted that language was a barrier to reconciliation, I related a slam poetry performance I'd recently seen presented by Ewok, a white rapper, poet and one of the gatekeepers of a particular hip-hop scene in Durban. I explained to Flash that one of the poems expressed the very same sentiments he felt. I then asked him if he still felt negative about the prospects of reconciliation, knowing that Ewok had the same ideological orientation as himself. Flash responded by stating, "It's just Ewok...I would like to see more people than Ewok say that...you can't just change just because of that one person. You have to assess. Ok, I'm glad... that he [too has] seen the problem, but there's still a problem there".

However, linguistic differences do not cause tension only between black and white participants, but also between the black participants. There is tension between the black middle-classes and the black working classes:

> **Well, speaking truthful-wise, speaking truthful-wise if the black guys are there, most of them are rapping in Zulu. A couple rap in English, and probably can't even rap in Zulu, so they'll even be segregation within the two anyway. So, even with the black people there's segregation, that's because of the language, that's because of separate uh uh ... societies, class if you wanna call it [that]. (Jerome)**

5.1 Multilingualism and unilingualism

In her study of musical imagining and racial stereotyping, Robertson (2005) also notes that language was often identified as an alienating factor in the type of music one would listen to. Some of the participants in her study stated that they didn't listen to some types of music because they felt excluded linguistically, that the music was not created for people of all 'races'. Robertson argues that in order to establish a shared national identity, we must contest the "divisive potential of exclusive interpretations of language use in music" (2005:108). Matt also believes that linguistic differences are the cause of underlying tensions at the *Life-check* sessions. He bitterly

complains about white people being expected to listen to rap music performed in a language they don't understand:

> **If somebody is rappin' in Zulu the whole time and you can't understand it, like I'm saying, people relate to what they understand, this is why vernacular singers get more support from Zulu-speaking audiences, because they understand it. Of course they can't get as big a following from an English-speaking audience, *it's logical!* Whereas people can draw racial things from that, where is the racial? It's logic!**

However, it is that very attitude that frustrates Flash. He perceives unilingualism as a lack of commitment to renegotiating power dynamics inherent in language use. He bitterly states:

> **We [should] all appreciate each other's languages instead of having one language as the dominant language and other languages as not so dominant ... they should introduce IsiZulu strong at a very young [school] grade and it shouldn't be a matter of choice ... it shouldn't be a matter of "you can choose whether you want to do it or not". You *have* to do it, like we *have* to do English!**

Ntshaledi perceives multilingualism as a commitment to the ideals of the new South Africa. She argues that if one performs in one language only, one risks alienating other linguistic groups:

> **He's only communicating to the Zulus, it's not only about the Zulus here, like, let's take the Bat [the Bat Centre], it's not just Zulus, there's Xhosas, Swazis [and] Vendas. You have to communicate to all of them. I think that it's what hip-hop is about, if you look at the Mc, let's use Nthabi, the new Mc, she raps in IsiXhosa, Zulu and English, and like everybody is talking about her. Why? Because she's communicating to everybody. To me, if you doin' a poem in IsiZulu it's like you communicating to them, you not communicating to all of us. I don't think it has to work like that, you just have to use all the languages in order for us to be together.**

In an effort to aid reconciliation, the post-apartheid government declared eleven languages the official languages of South Africa. The necessity of this action highlights the highly politicized nature of languages in this society and the need to include all linguistic groups as well as their importance in the new South Africa. It is no different in the hip-hop community in Durban; to aid the project of reconciliation and unity, there needs to be an attempt at, and commitment by all linguistic groups to, multilingualism.

Chapter 4

Reinforcing /challenging 'race' through genre specific conventions

In this thesis I hold that specific genre conventions and practices allow hip-hop to either reinforce or challenge participants' perceptions of 'race'. This chapter focuses on the ways in which rap performance may do that through the varieties of polyphonic discourse/double-voiced discourse. I focus on how the conventions of genre and the context from which a text originates limit the meaning the audience might ascribe to a text. Following that, I discuss the modes of listening that allow the audience to interpret each performance in a manner that is fitting with genre norms. Last, I present three songs for analysis concentrating on the extent to which they reinforce or challenge the audiences' perceptions about 'race' and in what ways they do this.

1 Musical reception

1.1 Genre and 'meaning'

Brackett argues that our evaluations and interpretations of music " arise more from our familiarity with specific musical histories, musical *topoi*, and genealogies of genres..." (1995:202). It is therefore important to study both context and text as the 'meaning' of a song cannot be found in the text alone, but can be revealed in semantic socio-political, historical and economic contexts; "contexts consist of texts and texts exist within contexts" (Brackett 1995:17). It can be said that meanings produced upon reception involve dialogue on many different levels: dialogue between the text and other texts, context and other contexts; dialogue between various genre conventions to which a text references; and dialogue between the listening experience and previous listening experiences of the same or similar songs.

1.2 Adequate listening

Modes of listening are, according to Stockfelt, the different ways of listening that a listener can employ (1997: 132). Modes of listening are conditioned, first, by the different contexts in which one encounters music; second, different views of the

relation between music, the individual and society; and third, different activities the listener could be expected to perform (1997: 132). Genre-normative listening situations are the number of listening practices in a given historical situation that constitute the genre-specific relation between music and the listener. These, Stockfelt argues, "determine the genre-defining property and the *ideal* relation between music and listener that were presumed in the formation of the musical style" (my italics) (1997: 136). Genre-normative listening situations are always changing according to the fluctuations of society: thus each genre has a number of genre-normative modes of listening (1997:137). Adequate listening occurs when "one listens to music according to the exigencies of a given social situation and according to the predominant sociocultural conventions of the subculture to which the music belongs" (ibid.). Stockfelt makes a point of clarifying that adequate listening does not mean a superior way of listening, but rather developing an ability to listen for what is relevant to the genre, listening "*for what is adequate to understanding according to the specific genre's comprehensible context*" (ibid.) Adequate listening, therefore, is ideological: "it relates to a set of opinions belonging to a social group about ideal relations between individuals, individuals and cultural expression, and between the cultural expressions and the construction of society" (1997:138). The idea of genre and genre-normative listening modes can be helpful with regard to understanding how particular meanings may be ascribed to particular music.

2. Analysis: reinforcing/ challenging 'race' in rap performance

Songs selected for analyses were chosen because interviewees specifically mentioned either the songs or the artists. With regard to selecting songs of mentioned artists, I selected songs that were pertinent to the study. Although the intention was to play back the selected songs to interviewees, I was unable to do this with all the interviewees, as they were either unable to make meetings owing to transport problems, or they were unavailable due to time constraints. Analyses are based on the assumption that as a member of the hip-hop community I experience the music in a somewhat similar way as other members might. It is important to note that in asking the participants to listen to the songs and make comments about them, one is asking them to listen in a *particular* manner, one the participants would perhaps not employ in their everyday lives. However, that is not to say that with repeated listenings in

different contexts the participants would not make readings of the music that are similar to those provided presently.

2.1 Reinforcing 'race' in the text

Take a *stand* by Nymphonik Bastards

Take a *stand* by Nymphonik Bastards begins with a sample from the movie *How High* that stars Redman and Methodman of New York based Five Percenter rap group, The Wutang Clan. A sample is often used for the associative atmosphere it brings to a song (Miyakawa 2005:122). The Nymphonik Bastards use the sample to introduce the issue of racialized discourse. Their use of this specific sample, with its ties to Five Percenters, conveys a militant attitude. The effectiveness of the use of this sample (or any other sample) depends on the listeners' historical and cultural knowledge (ibid.). In the following sample, a white history professor speaks about history being a version of the truth written by the metropolis, for the metropolis. This explains the exclusion of black pioneers in grand historical narratives:

> Of course history is a record of an account of the past, but the issue here is who is recording the account? If it's snowflake, whitey, pale face, peckerwoods, cracker, well, we've got Cleopatra looking like Elizabeth Taylor, Jesus looks like a hippy in a dashiki! But if it's one of my proud black people that's doing the recording of the account, well, we might have Moses looking like this fine black man right here! (Nymphonik Bastards: 2006)

The music is heavily percussive with eerie-sounding synths forming the harmonic background. The vocal melodic line used in the chorus and the last verse is in the style of reggae. The Nymphonik Bastards utilize the 'already-spoken' quality of this musical genre: the stylistic aura and connotations that reggae has acquired, amongst others, is that of the emancipation of black people, the struggle for self-determination and equality. Foehr states "Bob Marley spread the word of liberation reggae around the world. His lyrics, more than the beat, made the music an anthem for freedom

fighters and the oppressed people" (2000: 96). The reggae genre is sympathetic, socially and temporally close (Morson and Emerson 1990:137) to the racialized issues tackled in *Take a stand*. The use of reggae is what Bakhtin terms "unidirectional passive double-voiced" words, which are used "when the speaker and the other [the previous speaker of the utterance] have the same task at hand"(ibid. 150). The use of Stylization (a form of "unidirectional passive double-voiced"), which is when the rapper, in this case, "adopts the other's utterance whose way of speaking is regarded as essentially correct and in accord with the task to be accomplished" (ibid: 150), validates the view of the Nymphonik Bastards by virtue of association with the discourses of the reggae genre.

In the first verse, Black Hitlah, a member of the Nymphonik Bastards, describes the lives of young black males living in the location, who have few opportunities and are subject to police harassment because they are black. In the second verse, Bullet bemoans the fact that little has changed since the end of apartheid. In the third verse, San, also a member of the Nymphonik Bastards, criticizes missionaries, capitalism, and corruption in government. The following is the second half of Bullet's verse:

> ... Greeted with suspicious stare/ Like "what you doing here? Not to be racist or anything/ they stole my car which was parked right there/ so cops sent you to make sure/ you're not one of them/ I like your name (what's your name?)/ you speak good English/ you're not like the rest of them/ I don't care whether you're black or white/ I'm not racist or anything/ But all you blacks look alike"

In the second verse, "single-voiced discourse of the second type" is used (Morson and Emerson 1990: 148). It is the objectified discourse of a represented person, that is, "a narrator's representation of a character's words in a way felt to be somehow characteristic or typical of the character as an individual or a member of a social group" (Morson and Emerson 1990: 149). This is not "active-double voiced" discourse because the white speaker's word is still under the control of the parodist. However, the white speaker takes "a sideward glance" (ibid: 155) at the rapper's word, preempting a hostile response, he states, " I'm not racist or anything".

The question then is, what is the effect of this kind of speech? Flash, a black producer, believes that it gives a realistic account of the experiences of black people: being judged on the fluency of their use of English. He believes that discussing it in a rap song will inform white people "...they pissin' us of when they say that, you know. So, by them hearing this music, maybe they'll stop doin' that". Lexikon, a coloured rapper and poet, states that the song is "so real" because Bullet takes on the voice of a "typical white person" and the things they tend to say. Pearce (1994) states that single-voiced discourse of the second type is effective "[B]ecause we are given 'their own words'... we believe that we are being given their authentic selves" (1994:125).

2.2 Challenging 'race' in the text

2.2.1 'Race' and authenticity

D.O.T- Definition Of Taste by Creamy Ewok

Authenticity is constructed through different means in different music genres (Brackett 1995:19). Alan Light, the editor of *Spin* magazine, claims that authenticity is more important in rap music than in any other musical genre (Armstrong 2004). Armstrong argues that key cultural symbols in rap music function as invocations of authenticity:

> Three of these central semantic dimensions of rap authenticity are the racial, the gender/sexual, and social location. First, rap is black cultural expression, not co-opted whiteness. White rappers immediately generate questions of cultural property and appropriation. Next, rap is male dominated, misogynist ... Finally, rap is from the streets, the music of the underclass essentially opposed to those enjoying a bourgeois suburban life. (Armstrong 2004:338)

In discussing constant attacks on white rap as a hoax, mimicry and parody of black culture, Perkins cites the lack of authenticity amongst white rappers as the reason they are not respected by their black counterparts (1996: 45). Perkins states, "...in the wider arena of the culture industry, a white rapper becomes one of thousands of commodities to be consumed by an ever expanding chorus of small town and

suburban consumers" (ibid: 46). If we take Armstrong's prerequisites for authenticity as just, then white rappers are not taken seriously because, first, they are white and are trying to be black; and second, they cater for the suburban market. Perkins states that white rappers who have managed to gain respect and establish themselves in the culture, such as Cypruss Hill, have done so by celebrating their ethnicity. Perkins quotes House, a member of Cypruss Hill, 'We just happen to be Irish Americans. We're just lettin' people know where we're from. We're not tryin' to front[21] like anything but what we are' (ibid: 48). In celebrating their whiteness, the members of Cypruss Hill are staying 'real' to themselves, which is a prerequisite of hip-hop culture. Armstrong argues that white rapper Eminem constructs his authenticity, amongst other ways, by referring to his whiteness numerous times (2004:341). Armstrong states:

> So, instead of deemphasizing his whiteness, Eminem makes it the cutting edge that defines his essence as a rapper. His race becomes the taken-for-granted source and marker of his rap identity... Eminem cannot be inauthentic because he acknowledges the truth about himself. He accomplishes a self-conscious parody of rap's racially based authenticity. (2004:343)

In his track *D.O.T*, Ian Robinson, who usually goes by the name of Ewok, is credited as '*Creamy* Ewok' in the sleeve of the mix-tape (my italics). Like Eminem and other successful white rappers before him, Ewok refers to his whiteness as a way of being 'real' and not pretending to be something else. The credit on the sleeve of the mix-tape emphasizes his whiteness, and in so doing sets the tone for the content of the song, which in essence refutes essentialist discourse that states that white people cannot rap (Armstrong 2004:339). In the song, Ewok establishes himself as a worthy rapper in spite of his whiteness, or even because of his whiteness. The song, titled *D.O.T*, an acronym for *Definition Of Taste*, not only acknowledges his whiteness, but credits it as the reason he is a good rapper: full cream tastes better;

> That smooth white boy from around the way/ super sent more fat/
> full cream like my name

[21] To 'front' is to pretend.

Ewok never mentions the dominant view that 'white boys can't rap' (Armstrong 2004: 339), but we are aware that that is what the song is about as he constantly takes a sideward glance at another's word, preempting a hostile response. In the following extract, Ewok employs hidden dialogicality, which is "when we sense that we are presented with a conversation, albeit we only have one side of the conversation, because each utterance 'points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person'"(Morson and Emerson 1990: 156). The song is directed at whomever has an essentialist view concerning the ability to rap based on 'race'. Ewok makes it clear that it is not about 'race', but about skill, and gives himself, his skill and talent as evidence that would be difficult to refute:

> It's all about skills/ and that's the truth/
> I be living proof/ and that's the truth…

The music echoes the lyrical message as the Dj fills the songs with scratches, cuts and breaks, emphasizing technical skill.

Ewok is eager to assert his individuality and not be lumped together with other white rappers, particularly Eminem:

> You lookin' at me twice when I'm stepping correct
> I'm sick of Eminem jokes 'cause that's all I get

Ewok does not want a comparison with Eminem based on 'race', as a conscious rapper, his style and content is significantly different from Eminem's. " First, there is being true to oneself. Rap illustrates self-creation and individuality as a value" (Armstrong 2004:336). It is important for Ewok to be seen in his own light, rather than as an imitation of Eminem. Lexikon believes that Ewok's ability to talk about 'race' and the Eminem jokes show his honesty, thus his authenticity. She concurs that rapping is about skill and not about 'race' and states, "I think he's kept it proper". On the other hand, Flash is nonchalant about the song: he merely states, "Basically, it's a nice track ". In a previous interview, Flash had stated that if he knows a white person

is rapping, he tends not to listen in an in-depth fashion to the song. However, his comment seems to be an acceptance, no matter how reluctant, of Ewok's skill.

2.3 Challenging and reinforcing 'race'

2.3.1 Spatialized 'race' and racialized space

Dbn North to Wentworth by Big Idea

Big Idea is a multiracial live hip-hop band that draws from the jazz idiom and mixes it with hip-hop soul to create their unique sound. In *Dbn North to Wentworth*, Big Idea demonstrates the segregation apparent in greater Durban, whilst celebrating Big Idea's ability to transgress those boundaries.

> Man I'm parkin' in Umhlanga Rocks with these lahnee[22] lighties[23]/ slangin' socks and chucks/ you know they got credit cards/ but what am I doin' here? / I'm looking for lux[24] 'cause I'm money driven/ like a drug lord or your landlord where you livin'/ leasin' from Sicilians with Brazilian connections/ man you can even check Yugoslavia got their own section/ you see around here/ everyone more or less/ sticks to themselves/ but we wide open like fuel injectors and valves/ we could rock *Cloud nine*[25]/ hit the beach you could dive in/ dala[26] at the *Bat*[27]/ take it all in our stride…
>
> … Those North Beach ores want trouble/ they agro on coke/ while we lovin' on the bumbles/ I don't really wanna rumble/ but on the humble
> lets snatch their cell phones from them/ sell them at jumble/ "What's the big idea/ why you shoppin' over here?"/ We make you disappear out of the atmosphere…

---

[22] A slang word referring to white people.
[23] A young person.
[24] Abbreviation of luxury?
[25] Cloud Nine is a 'white' club in North Beach.
[26] A slang word that means 'to play'.
[27] The Bat Centre.

> …. You shouldn't move slow through Umbilo/ 'cause you just never know who's a b*ruin ou*[28] acting (unintelligible)

Q, the lead rapper of Big Idea, mentions a number of stereotypes, commenting on the relationship between 'race' and space: white teenagers from Umhlanga Rocks who wear socks with Chuck Taylor[29] shoes (ghetto dwellers apparently don't) and have credit cards; North Beach (a wealthy area) residents who are high on cocaine; and black and coloured people from Wentworth and Umbilo who are violent criminals. Commenting on his own verse and Q's verse, Bullet states:

> **If we gonna mend any relationships, we gotta be able to sit down and highlight our flaws without sugarcoating, with total honesty. Not to offend, but only to be true to our task. 'Cause c'mon, we all know that I'm a usual suspect. The fact that there's crime, 'they, them', it's me you're talking about! You know that as soon as I go to Gateway[30], heads turn, like 'ok, here they are again'. They follow us!**

On first listening, it is not clear whether or not this is an attempt to undermine those stereotypes or reinforce them, but Q's celebration and boast of the bands multi-spatiality and criticism of those who 'stick to themselves' suggests dark humour.

The Big Idea is not restricted by racialized boundaries and if it takes violence to inhabit certain places then so be it. Using "single-voiced discourse of the second type, the objectified discourse of a represented person" (Morson and Emerson1990: 149), he imitates the 'North Beach ores' ("What's the big idea/ why you shoppin' over here?"), and in so doing, he gives us their voice, making his account believable. In the chorus, Q proclaims his knowledge of and love for Durban in spite of the segregation – hence the displacement and mental and emotional turmoil he must feel:

---

[28] A coloured person.

[29] Chuck Taylor, All Star shoes are a brand from the USA named after basketball player, Chuck Taylor. The shoe is very popular in the locations, amongst kwaito and rap music fans. In fact, during my research I found it necessary to buy a pair in order to fit in as most of the audience members wore a pair. Chuck Taylors are also the shoe of choice amongst 'Emo' (emotional) kids.

[30] The biggest mall in Southern Africa, it is located in Durban North.

> 'Cause we know Durban like the back of our hands ma boy
> We know Durban like the beach knows the sand ma boy
> We know Durban like the zol[31] in our hands
> Like Al Qaeda knows Afghanistan
> Like a robber knows his plans
> I know Durban and I love it
> Like a thief loves the rand
> Like my white (unintelligible) who likes his queen African
> From Durban North to Wentworth and back again

Forman explains how Q can celebrate Durban despite the segregation that he criticizes:

> The "sense of place" that individuals acquire, however, is not based solely on a positive relation to a known environment, for, as Tuan suggests, topophilia or "love of Place" (1974) exists alongside and often in tandem with one's experience of "landscapes of fear" (1979), which are capable of producing what might be termed topophobia. For the hip-hop culture, place may be significant for its familiarity, its nurturing factor, and its supportive infrastructures, but it may also harbor other, more menacing elements ... It may be threatening, alienating, and dangerous to its inhabitants. (Forman 2002:29)

In this song we find an example of what W.E.B. Du Bois calls double consciousness: "that psyche particular to black and racially oppressed people that has internalized the 'contradiction and 'splitting' of national and racial 'longings'"" (Wald 2000:13). Q has a desire to celebrate the possibilities in post-apartheid South Africa, and yet there exists the reality of a heavily segregated society twelve years after the advent of democracy. Q *knows* the ways of Durban and takes it as it is with all its complexities: his love for Durban is similar to that of one who longs for money and resorts to crime to get it and it is comparable to the 'colonizing', desirous gaze of the white male. Power or the lack thereof seems to be the pervasive theme in his similes; Q wants the

[31] A slang term for marijuana.

power to move freely in his locale (with out the suspicious stares branding him a criminal). The text implies that Q understands that space is not "'innocent' or apolitical, unimplicated in the patterning of power, authority, and domination…"(Forman 2002:4), but rather that it is a means of control. Q walks us through the different areas in Durban inhabited by different 'race' groups of varying socio-economic status and finally ends up in Wentworth, previously classified as a coloured area. Nearing the end of the song the music gets louder and more menacing, repeating the chorus that consists of a descending four-note chromatic scale. With additional reverb on the voice, Q starts shouting

> We take you all around Durban and back again
> Once we got you in Wentworth you stuck there!
> When we got you over here man, we got you where we want you
> We got you! We got you! We got you!
> Exactly where we want you! Exactly where we want you!

Q does not explicitly state to whom the above is addressed to, but I believe we can assume that he is referring to white people who don't go to areas like Wentworth. The Big Idea invites the audience to come along on this journey through Durban only to turn on them when they reach an area inhabited by 'coloured criminals'. The threat is clear and is Signifyin(g) on fears white people harbour concerning black and coloured people and their surroundings. It could all very well be a joke, but it is a *serious joke*.

Lexikon is unable to make up her mind on whether or not this song helps her to look past issues of 'race' in a positive way or brings into focus 'race' and racialized practice. She states, " It sounds like a multiracial experience … and not even to say, they do it to go out of their way [going to different areas in Durban], no! This is their lifestyle!" But in discussing the rest of the song, her tone changes "… its amazing … it's quite a small context if you look at it as Durban, and yet these three different areas, three completely different lifestyles, three different economic standards ... I still maintain these people are more than Mcs, they are reflectors of reality." Her comment praising Q's ability gives us insight to her feelings; that the segregation in Durban is a *reality*.

This chapter has looked at how, through the use of the varieties of polyphonic discourse/double-voiced discourse, utterances in local rap performance, thrust in semantic fields of answerability, which are contingent on historical, socio-political and economic factors, allow particular meanings to be drawn from the music. I focussed on how the conventions of genre allow rappers to tackle issues such as racism, essentialism and the relationship between 'race', space and power as well as how conventions of genre contextualise the dominant narratives that are being refuted in the above mentioned songs, and in so doing reinforce or challenge the audiences' perceptions of 'race'.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In the present chapter, I briefly discuss the participants' views of the role of rap performance in the project of reconciliation. Following that, I summarize the key findings of this research and suggest areas of further research.

1. Reflections on Reconciliation

There were various views amongst the participants concerning the ability of rap performance to aid attempts at reconciliation, and these were contingent on the individual participants' definition of reconciliation.

Bullet's and Lexikon's views differed significantly from those of the rest of the participants. They both felt that reconciliation was a personal matter and that one has to "reconcile with the self" (Lexikon). Lexikon, a coloured female rapper and poet, stressed the importance of identity reconciliation: she encouraged an acknowledgement and celebration of indigenous knowledge systems and a spiritual and communal understanding of self. She states:

> **For me, it means reconciliation with the self, first and foremost. Because as South Africans, each person, no matter their race, we've been brought up looking up to Western ideology and it shocks me ... Even when it comes to, you know stories behind missionaries and Africa [she is referring to missionaries discouraging practices that were considered heathen] ...and I'll say to others, "do you, burn *impepho* (incense)?" and they'll say 'no, we're brought up in a Christian household' and I'll say "Roman Catholics burn incense!" ... I think it's so important that one finds reconciliation with themselves and not the Western type ideology. Not the Western concept of self: me, this body and only me, but self in that all selves that have come before you and all selves that are to come.**

On the other hand, Bullet, a black rapper, encourages an acceptance of the effects of apartheid on the past, present and future:

> **First of all, we, black people, need to reconcile with what happened. But not being forced 'cause it seems like we never had [a] choice, it was like ok, we have to forgive. He said he's sorry, you have to forgive him. 'I'm sorry dude'– that's it. You take it or leave it, so fuck you. Fuck you that I'm still bleeding, you know? I have to deal with it. So now we at that space where we have to reconcile with the fact that I'm bleeding, and that there's no-one else that's going to do anything about that except for me. Reconcile with that fact.**

Bullet views the idea of reconciliation as political jargon. He states, " To them [politicians] it's a superficial way of painting a rainbow on the fringes of indifference and cultural differences. Ignoring what's really happening, the gap that lies in between, so they paint a rainbow in there to make it all unified". It might seem that Bullet does not believe in reconciliation with an Other, but his disillusionment, I think, stems from the manner in which the government has dealt with reconciliation and the lack of clarity regarding the definition of the term.

Flash, a black producer, was adamant that rap performance could not aid attempts at reconciliation. He expressed resentment at the linguistic dominance of the minority and stated that without multilingualism, black people would not have equal access to job opportunities.

A commonly held view was that the presence of all 'races' at the shows indicated a commitment to a negotiation of racialized space (Bahle, Cindy, Ntshaledi, Zinhle, Daniel, 2Gees, Precision, Lexikon, Lerato, Bullet, Jerome and Siyamatic). Although Precision, a black Dj, was the most vocal on the segregation that occurs at *Life-check* and other hip-hop venues in Durban, he was adamant that the very presence of different racial groups was a positive step towards intergration: "Do I think *Life-check* in itself plays a role, I think it does, I mean it's evident. Evident because they're there,

the only thing, my only issue with *Life- check* is that people can be there, but not necessarily clearly interact". Following his comments on reconciliation, I asked Bullet whether or not he thought *Life-check* enabled artists and audiences to transgress racial and cultural differences. Despite his earlier utterances, Bullet responded, "Ya, I mean it actually does. Seriously, I'd be lying if I said no… From Liquid KZN to Crossiphoyisa to Big Idea, 'cause they being real to their own surroundings. Reconciling those parts of culture that were not meant to be together". The reason for Precision's and Bullet's seemingly conflicting responses lies in the contentious definition of reconciliation. Reconciliation could include a wide range of meanings; the Christian understanding of reconciliation sanctioned by the TRC (Alexander 2002:125), a bringing together, an understanding, and a squaring off. If understood as a bringing together of people of different groups, a reconciliation of cultural practice, hip-hop may play a *major* role in reconciliation as it successfully does this. However, if understood, as Bullet understands reconciliation, as a reconciliation of socio-economic practices, then hip-hop has a *minor* role to play: it may highlight these issues, but cannot solve them.

Mary Robertson (2005) states that the shared physical space of the concert or club is often considered a force for integration in South Africa (2005:136). However, "most participants felt that these experiences could not translate into increased integration in other realms of social life" (ibid). Similarly, both Ryan and Daniel felt that the communal experience of rap performance enabled one to engage and identify with different 'race' groups. Daniel, a white producer, felt that a less racialized society was possible amongst the members of the hip-hop community. He stated that hip-hop could allow participants to see one another, first and foremost, as people, rather than as members of a 'race': "…Ewok stops being white, he starts being Ewok. People identify him as Ewok and not as a white person, and in that way, yes it [rap] does [aid attempts at reconciliation]". Daniel believes that hip-hop can bring a new consciousness to its practitioners and that they can find an identity in hip-hop. He wonders "…whether or not that hip-hop identity is powerful enough to change into a South African identity" and concludes: " I don't believe so". Ryan, a coloured fan, stated that

> **...[*Life-check]* gives you a different perspective on everything... you come here and everyone is one. So it breaks away the whole thing, the apartheid thing, away you know? It's just one family, one music, under one umbrella. So hip-hop is just an umbrella and everyone is standing under it, getting away from the rain.**

But in addition to this, Ryan stated that "Hip-hop won't reconcile us: in order to reconcile the nation it has to grab everyone's attention, and the thing is, hip-hop only grasps the youth's attention".

2. Key findings

This study examined, first, the contents and contexts of rap performance produced by black and white South African rappers in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal to find out *how,* through form, genre conventions and connotations, as well as the discourses surrounding the rap music genre, rap is given meaning. Second, the study examined the degree to which rap performance produced in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, is perceived by black and white performers and audiences as either reinforcing or challenging their perceptions of 'race' in post-apartheid South Africa. Third, this research concerned itself with the participants' perceptions of what this use of rap performance implies for the prospects of reconciliation. The following are the key findings of this research study.

As utterances 'remember' earlier contexts, with each utterance in rap music a rapper may comment on the utterance of the previous speaker and the discourse around that topic by either agreeing or disagreeing with the previous speaker. In other words, a rapper can, in one discursive act, call upon the 'already-spoken' to either reinforce what he/she is saying, or alternatively, to lay it before the audience and question and challenge it. The rapper's word may continue or alter the shape of the discourse by leaving a trace in the words' semantic layers (Morson and Emerson 1990:139), and the process would thereby repeat itself, and so on and so on. As the practices of hip-hop culture originated in a highly racialized environment, the discourses surrounding rap music and the utterances of rap music are always and already racialized, for inherent in each language are the contingent historical, socio-political and economic

forces that have made it possible (Morson and Emerson 1990:140). By taking part in a racialized discourse, rappers and audiences are able to comment on previous utterances in the discourse surrounding rap music, either reinforcing or challenging them.

Acknowledging the idiom as a of form of black cultural expression (Rose 1994), interviewees mentioned narratives of hip-hop's historical origins, rap artists' use of Five Percenter and Black Nationalist ideologies, and racialized poverty, as factors that either reinforce or challenge notions of 'race'. The simultaneous transgression of, and/or adherence to, racialized space and spatialized 'race' by different 'races', as well as the presence or absence of multilingualism, were viewed as indicators of the level of commitment to the notion of a democratic place for all 'race' and language groups in post-apartheid South Africa.

Most participants stated that the presence of all 'races' at the *Life-check* hip-hop sessions shows the commitment of the Other to the negotiation of social power in South Africa, and that in bringing people of different racial groups together, local rap performance aids attempts at reconciliation. Few participants expressed reservations about the ability of rap performance to aid attempts at reconciliation: those that did so were worried about identity reconciliation and the harmonization of socio-economic and linguistic practices.

3. Further research

It would be interesting to know whether or not rap performance can foster a deeper understanding of the issues raised during this research amongst the participants. Moreover whether or not this understanding can garner a support for, amongst white *and* black hip-hop heads, government policies that aim to redistribute wealth and create opportunities for previously disadvantaged South Africans.

Perhaps, in time, the affective and effective alliances produced through hip-hop will deliver inter-racial coalitions: perhaps hip-hop will provide the framework upon which the interests of young South Africans are articulated and lobbied for.

Appendix 1

Name	Sex	'Race'group	Residence	Role	Place, Date of interview
2Gees	Male	White	Durban North	Drummer in hip-hop band, Big Idea	*UKZN, 13 July 2006
Anna	Female	White	Manor Gardens	Audience	Bat Centre, 3 March 2007
Bahle	Male	Black	Gauteng	Audience	UKZN, 10 September 2006
Black Moss	Male	Black	Durban North	Rapper	UKZN, 26 June 2006
Bullet	Male	Black	Durban	Rapper	Bat Centre, 14 October 2006
Chev	Male	Black	Glenn Hills	Audience	Bat Centre, 5 May 2007
Cindy	Female	Black	Umhlanga Rocks	Audience	Bat Centre, 5 May 2007
Daniel	Male	White	Glenwood	Producer	UKZN, 17 June 2006
Flash	Male	Black	UKZN	Producer	UKZN, 12 June 2006
Jason	Male	White	Did not want to say	Graffiti	Bat Centre, 3 March 2007`
Jerome	Male	Black	Durban North	Audience	Bat Centre, 5 May 2007
Lerato	Female	Black	Albert Park	Rapper/poet	Bat Centre, 7 October 2006
Lexikon	Female	Coloured	Red Hill	Rapper/poet	Aliwal Café, 31 March 2007
Marco	Male	White	Did not want to say	Graffiti	Bat Centre, 3 March 2007
Matt	Male	White	Sweden	Audience/organizer	UKZN, 23 August 2007
Ntshaledi	Female	Black	Matabeni	Audience/ poet	Bat Centre, 5 may 2007
Precision	Male	Black	Mafikeng	Dj	UKZN, 19 August 2007
Ryan	Male	Coloured	UmKomaas	Audience	Bat Centre, 5 May 2007
Sherrie	Female	White	Did not want to say	Audience/graffiti	Bat Centre, 3 March 2007
Siyamatic	Male	Coloured	Berea	Rapper	Newcafe, 20 June 2007
Zinhle	Female	Black	KwaMashu	Audience/poet	Bat Centre, 3 March 2007

*UKZN: University of Kwazulu-Natal

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