

Hip-hop, Identity, and Cultural Hybridity: An Exploration of Motswako as a Bicultural Phenomenon



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ABSTRACT

South Africa is a linguistically and culturally diverse country. South African locals normally assimilate more than one culture, officially and unofficially. The former refers to the systematic transition experienced by speakers of African languages in government schools from acquiring knowledge in their main language, to learning in English, while the latter refers to voluntary access to cultures of other people within their immediate environment. As locals acquire other languages, they in turn acquire the culture of the language they are acquiring because language and culture are indissoluble. This study is premised on the idea that music is a universal language with which musicians communicate aspirations, desires and experiences. Therefore, in this study, the researchers sought to explore the exchange of ideas in hip-hop collaborative projects. The study revealed that in the past, hip-hop was undesirably perceived in South Africa due to associations it had with offensive language and violence. Within the context of the historical past of South Africa, hip-hop was embraced as a mouthpiece to comment against social ills and injustices when locals could not freely express themselves. However, contemporarily, thematic concepts expressed in hip-hop include value for life, an assumption of an expensive lifestyle, objectification of females, socio-political observations, and so forth. The study concludes that collaboration is an important factor in career development within the hip-hop fraternity and encourages collaborative projects beyond terrestrial borders. This study contributes to literature on music and its impact on culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Hip-hop locally and internationally carries the burden of representing a unified notion of Blackness through music and culture. Dyson points out that rap music is emblematic of the glacial shift in aesthetic sensibilities between blacks of different generations.¹ Consequently, the focus is being directed toward significant economic disparities that separate impoverished black communities from their middle and

¹ Michael Eric Dyson, *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture*. (Oxford University Press, 1995).

upper-middle-class counterparts. This study seeks to examine the manifestation and global dissemination of bi-culturalism, by probing its transnational and local adaptation by rap artists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study highlights hip-hop's significance as a medium for articulating and navigating complex, multiple identities. Furthermore, the literature review introduction typically addresses the global diffusion of hip-hop and how it adapts to different cultural contexts. It explores how hip-hop maintains its core principles while incorporating local cultural elements, thus fostering a multitude of bicultural identities worldwide.

Biculturalism and South African Music

Becker and Dastile conducted an ethnographic study that explored the intersection of global and local identities through hip-hop music in Philippi Township in South Africa.² This study highlighted the dynamic interplay between global and local cultural forces in shaping music in Philippi. The study manifests that local rappers navigate complex identities in music that are influenced by local and global expressions. Individual identities are influenced largely by socio-cultural and socio-historical events.

In view of culture, it encompasses dynamic and complex ways that individuals express themselves and the manner in which people express themselves manifests in music, dance, arts and literature. Culture is a way of life shared by a particular group of people in how they communicate their message in their songs and how they carry themselves.³ International collaborations signal contact between two cultures from different regions, which influence the cultural trade of ideas and worldviews. In the music industry, artists from different parts of the world collaborate on songs. South African hip-hop artists have also been part of meaningful collaborations with outstanding international artists.

In the sprawling townships of South Africa, a vibrant and dynamic musical genre emerged as a reflection on the complexities of post-apartheid identity and cultural expression. Motswako hip-hop, which is a fusion of hip-hop and traditional Setswana music embodies the synergies between local and global cultures. In post-apartheid South Africa, this music genre became a powerful medium for self-expression, social commentary and cultural negotiation among youth in the country. Despite, its growing popularity and influence, Motswako remains understudied in the South African cultural discourse. The complex dynamics of cultural hybridity and identity formation within this music genre pose significant questions regarding the nature of cultural exchange and representation.

Biculturalism throughout the world has been encouraged by factors that include socio-political change that has increased trade and movements between countries and continents. In biculturalism, two cultures of two people are identified as equally important to them.⁴ This indicates that culture includes traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other societies. Idang highlights that these peculiar traits include people's language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing and so on.⁵

Nguyen and Ferguson state that hip-hop is a unique cultural identity rooted globally, that includes dance, art, music as well as resistance to the dominant, mainstream.⁶ Hebdige argues that hip-hop started in New York in the early seventies when rappers wanted to voice out their frustrations and rebellion against social domination, violence, and discrimination.⁷ In Africa or Latin America, hip-hop was used by artists whose communities were marginalized socially and economically. In the context of South Africa, this music genre had been idealised as the music of struggle wherein rappers rapped against the prevalence

² Heike Becker and Nceba Dastile, "Global and African: Exploring Hip-Hop Artists in Philippi Township, Cape Town," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 31, no. 1–2 (2008): 20–29.

³ Gabriel E Idang, "African Culture and Values," *Phronimon* 16, no. 2 (2015): 97–111.

⁴ Alan Meca et al., "Biculturalism and Bicultural Identity Development: A Relational Model of Bicultural Systems," in *Youth in Superdiverse Societies* (Routledge, 2019), 41–57.

⁵ Idang, "African Culture and Values."

⁶ J. Nguyen, and G. M. Ferguson, "A global cypher: The role of hip hop in cultural identity construction and navigation for Southeast Asian American youth. In J. McKenzie (Ed.), *Globalization as a Context for Youth Development*". *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2019, 164: 99-115.

⁷ Dick Hebdige, *Cutn'mix: Culture, identity and Caribbean music*. (Routledge, 2003).

of uncontrollable social ills, and systemic injustices, and later on, the genre was characterised by flamboyant lifestyle practices.

In his classic debut album *Illmatic* Nas is acutely aware of the predominance of the oral in hip-hop music. The narratives and rhymes are a virtuosic example of the possibilities of heard rap through their intricate uses of interior rhyme, complicated rhyming patterns, and enjambment. However, in explicit terms and somewhat paradoxical, Nas constructs himself as a writer or he sees his rhymes as operating very much in the literary realm. In *N.Y. State of Mind*, Nas informs his listeners that he is a musician who is inflicting a composition of pain. "I'm like Scarface sniffin' cocaine. Holdin' a M-16, see, with the pen, I'm extreme (emphasis added)". Here, Nas stresses the importance of the pen as a metonym. The pen is also opposed to the gun ("an M-16") when he asserts that it is the pen and his ability to write, and not the gun that makes him "extreme." His status as a radical and perhaps his worth as an artist, is primarily derived not from the gangster fantasy perpetuated by Brian de Palma's film but from his ability to write rhymes, which he in turn delivers when he raps.⁸

Hip-hop is a multicultural phenomenon that has become an outlet of expression for many young people. It is globally used by youth to develop pluralistic and hybrid identities worldwide.⁹ Cohen indicates that in contemporary societies, technological advances have increased the accessibility and portability of hip-hop music, thereby allowing for unprecedented production and consumption of a medium that allows individuals to enact and display various social identities in the course of daily activities.¹⁰ Cohen further indicates that music may then be considered as a primary cultural influence in the lives of youth.¹¹ In South Africa, hip-hop grew out of city slum environments and became the voice of the voiceless. The Capetonian groups of the 1980s promoted the concept of 'black' (or 'African') cultural identity in order to resist the apartheid regime's categorisation of themselves as 'coloureds' with the intention of dismantling the barriers of racial categorisation implemented by the apartheid system.¹² The collapse of apartheid brought with it the commercialisation of this music genre which ultimately suppressed its "protest" feature.¹³

In the early 1980s hip-hop in South Africa became a roller coaster ride, which is a protest tool among non-white youths against apartheid. This genre of music became popular among young South Africans since the inception of democracy and has since been consumed and produced largely by young African males. Despite having its origin outside of Africa, hip-hop and its culture have been successfully accommodated in local languages and largely consumed by youth in South Africa. Within the context of South Africa, this genre of music is the youth's voice against social injustices and has been used as a visionary outlook that guides future aspirations.

In South Africa, there are variations within this musical genre. Rappers from Johannesburg frequently switch between isiZulu and other regional languages, such as isiXhosa. Rap music created in Cape Town's townships like Langa is frequently plagued with the isiXhosa language. Additionally, Setswana has appeared in numerous popular songs in the country. According to Ditsele, the origin of rap music in Setswana began in the middle of the 1990s when a musician from Botswana named Nomadic began alternating between Setswana and English in his songs.¹⁴ In the streets of Mahikeng, North-West, this hip-hop subgenre became well-known as Motswako, which signals a mixture of languages.

With the advent of 'Motswakolistas' like HHP who began rapping in Setswana in the mid-to-late 1990s, the popularity of this subgenre, which is lovingly known as Motswako, steadily grew.¹⁵ The following of this subgenre in the South African region where it first appeared helped to popularize it. Rap

⁸ Graham Chia-Hui Preston, "My pen rides the paper: Hip-hop, the technology of writing and Nas's *Illmatic*". *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 2002, 20 (3): 261–275.

⁹ Nguyen, and Ferguson, "A global cypher: The role of hip hop in cultural identity construction and navigation for Southeast Asian American youth"; G. Dimitriadis, *Performing identity/performing culture: Hip-hop as text, pedagogy, and lived practice*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2020).

¹⁰ D. Cohen, "The Role of Rap/Hip Hop Music in the Meaning and Maintenance of Identity in South African Youth" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2008).

¹¹ Cohen, "The Role of Rap/Hip Hop Music in the Meaning and Maintenance of Identity in South African Youth."

¹² Becker and Dastile, "Global and African: Exploring Hip-Hop Artists in Philippi Township, Cape Town."

¹³ Peter O Bodunrin, "The Question of African Philosophy," *Philosophy* 56, no. 216 (1981): 161–79.

¹⁴ Thabo Ditsele, "The Promotion of Setswana through Hip Hop and Motswakolistas," *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* 14, no. 1–2 (2017): 1–14.

¹⁵ Ditsele, "The Promotion of Setswana through Hip Hop and Motswakolistas."

had established itself in Setswana by the start of the new millennium, gaining popularity among those outside of Mahikeng. According to Ditsele, in the late 1990s, Stoaan Seate, a member of the well-known band Bongo Maffin, added Setswana lyrics to the group's songs.¹⁶

After the popularity of Motswako increased, some 'Motswakolistas' moved to Gauteng. This movement led to increased interaction between artists from different cultures in the music industry. While cross-provincial migration is not a new occurrence, the impact of cultural exchange has been significant in the arts. To celebrate their unique cultural backgrounds, artists expressed their singular cultural identities by practicing their art in their native languages. However, in cosmopolitan cities like Johannesburg, the prevalent multicultural ideologies encouraged 'Motswakolistas' to embrace a bicultural way of life. In Johannesburg, the ability to navigate through diverse cultural influences is crucial for forming relationships, finding work, and integrating with the local community.

Through their artistic endeavours and group undertakings, the researchers in this study contend that 'Motswakolistas' promote both their native cultures and at least one acquired culture. The rappers' overarching message in their artistic pursuits makes this dual cultural identity clear. This article's definition of cultural identity should go beyond conventional definitions to include the knowledge that hip-hop has its own culture. The unique culture known as hip-hop is a result of the rhythmic music played by DJs at dance events and clubs, the rise in popularity of breakdancers and graffiti artists, and the growing importance of MCs.

The Impact of Socio-political Environments on the Formation of Bicultural Identities

According to Soto just as a weathervane pivots in response to wind, identity is shaped and reshaped by the forces of the environment, culture and experience.¹⁷ Benet-Martinez et al. explicate that within this framework, the intersection of multiple cultures in bicultural individuals gives rise to the expression of plural identities.¹⁸ In West's view individuals who regularly engage with and identify with two or more cultures navigate diverse cultural environments daily.¹⁹ Kreitler and Dyson argue that the implications for navigating between different cultures are that bicultural individuals switch between cultural perspectives or lenses in response to situational cues, adapting their interpretation of the situation accordingly.²⁰ South African youth inhabit environments that are marked by financial hardship and political uncertainty. Many South African youth rely on their artistic gifts as vehicles to uproot them from destitution. As a result of their artistic prowess, some have been able to collaborate with overseas artists. Cross-continental collaborations have made it possible for people living in different environments to attain global reach and be able to exchange ideas between artists from different cultural backgrounds. The exchange of ideas, traditions, and perspectives is a powerful tool for breaking down barriers and building bridges between diverse societies.²¹ According to Bracknell, "While collaborations may be spontaneous or deliberate, positive interpersonal relationships seem to be at the core of effective musical partnerships."²² The formation of bicultural identities is significantly influenced by socio-political environments. Socio-political developments such as globalisation, colonialism, migration, education system and media representation influence people's perception of identity.

¹⁶ Ditsele, "The Promotion of Setswana through Hip Hop and Motswakolistas."

¹⁷ Amanda Christina Soto, *Bimusical Identity of Children in a Mexican American School* (University of Washington, 2012).

¹⁸ Verónica Benet-Martínez et al., "Negotiating Biculturalism: Cultural Frame Switching in Biculturals with Oppositional versus Compatible Cultural Identities," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33, no. 5 (2002): 492–516.

¹⁹ Alexandria Leta West, "The Cost of Being" True to Yourself" for Mixed Selves: Frame Switching Negatively Affects Biculturals' Perceived Authenticity, Impacting Well-Being, Intercultural Person Perception and Dating Prospects," 2020.

²⁰ Crystal Mata Kreitler and Kara S Dyson, "Cultural Frame Switching and Emotion among Mexican Americans," *Journal of Latinos and Education* 15, no. 2 (2016): 91–96.

²¹ Edward Agbai, Ebiye Agbai, and Emmanuel Sunday Oko-Jaja, "Bridging Culture, Nurturing Diversity: Cultural Exchange and Its Impact on Global Understanding," in *International Dialogue Of Civilization And Tolerance Conference-Abu Dhabi 2024*, 2024.

²² C. Bracknell, "Identity, Language and Collaboration in Indigenous Music," in *The Difference Identity Makes: Indigenous Cultural Capital in Australian Cultural Fields*, ed. L. Bamblett, F. Myers, and T. Rowse (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2019), 99–123.

The Intersectionality of Race, Ethnicity, and Hip-Hop Culture

The definition of culture encompasses shared customs, principles, and convictions.²³ Hip-hop has been widely embraced and adapted by diverse cultures globally. Marfori suggests that within the Filipino community, this cultural art form has been effectively reinterpreted and reinvented by Filipino youths, who have infused it with a deep sense of pride and belonging to their ethnicity.²⁴ Similar to Motswako artists, Filipino youth were empowered by hip-hop to develop new blended cultural traditions that assisted them in fostering a more cohesive and confident social identity, resulting in enhanced resilience and self-confidence in personal, social, and professional aspects. The significance of cultural identity includes how individuals or groups classify themselves based on factors such as language, ethnic background, nationality, religious beliefs, and gender identity.²⁵ Despite hip-hop's origins in the African American experience, it encircles more than just race, also addressing class dynamics and economic issues. According to Raines, hip-hop provides a compelling alternative to prevailing racial narratives, allowing artists to express their experiences and viewpoints through lyrics and visual storytelling.²⁶ Language is crucial in conveying people's thoughts and intentions, as stated by Alfian.²⁷ Therefore, language in hip-hop lyrics reflects the cultural identity of the artist.

The Influence of Globalization on Hip Hop's Evolution and its Implications for Cultural Identity.

Identity is a dynamic and fluid construct much like a weathervane that swings and turns in response to current social, cultural and personal pressures.²⁸ Contemporary trends in various spheres of life play a significant part in how people interact with each other and what happens around them. Alfian argues that the spread of cultural globalisation is facilitated by the way people consume goods, adopt lifestyles and engage with art.²⁹ Globalisation creates opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges and the blending of cultural practices. In view of hip-hop, Morgan indicates that regardless of whether hip-hop is expressed through grammar, vocabulary, discourse, or language ideology, it constitutes a globally recognised system of symbols that can be adapted to local cultural contexts.³⁰ According to Agbai, et al., hip-hop explores the complex dynamics of cultural exchange, integration and continuity.³¹ Although hip-hop has spread globally, it has been embraced and adopted by various cultures around the world to promote tolerance, empathy and mutual respect among diverse global communities. This multicultural adaptation highlights the flexibility of hip-hop and its ability to resonate with diverse racial and ethnic groups.

METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to uncover bicultural identity expressionism in the craft of 'Motswakolistas' together with their collaborative partner(s). To achieve this, the researchers followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research was deemed appropriate for this study because it examines a phenomenon in their natural environment, seeking to understand and interpret their meanings in the context of people's experiences and perspectives.³²

The study explored the bicultural aspect of 'Motswakolistas' in collaborative efforts through the use of thematic analysis. The thematic analysis allowed for the efficient utilization of available materials and the systematic application of gathered data. This is a qualitative analysis method that shifts the focus

²³ Kaushal Kumari, Sanjose A. Thomas, N. Gayathri, and D. Karunakaran. Principles of Sociology. AG Publishing House (AGPH Books), 2023.

²⁴ F. M. Marfori, "Hip Hop Culture and Its Effects on Filipino American Cultural Identification" (California State University, 2020).

²⁵ Marfori, "Hip Hop Culture and Its Effects on Filipino American Cultural Identification"; Kalle Berggren, "Theorizing Power, Identity and Hip Hop: Towards a Queer, Intersectional Approach," *Educare*, no. 2 (2016): 75–90; David Croteau and William Hoynes, "Social Inequality and Media Representation," *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*, 1997, 185–216.

²⁶ Brooklyn Ciara Raines, "Breathing New Life in the Classroom: Hip Hop as Critical Race Counterstories" (2013).

²⁷ Muhammad Rio Alfian, "The Impact of Globalization Process of Hip-Hop Music in Semarang as a Reflection of American Pop Culture (A Case Study of Semarang Hip-Hop Community)," *LANTERN (Journal on English Language, Culture and Literature)* 2, no. 2 (2013): 151–60.

²⁸ Soto, *Bimusical Identity of Children in a Mexican American School*.

²⁹ Alfian, "The Impact of Globalization Process of Hip-Hop Music in Semarang as a Reflection of American Pop Culture (A Case Study of Semarang Hip-Hop Community)."

³⁰ Marcyliena Morgan, "'The World Is Yours': The Globalization of Hip-Hop Language," *Social Identities* 22, no. 2 (2016): 133–49.

³¹ Agbai, Agbai, and Oko-Jaja, "Bridging Culture, Nurturing Diversity: Cultural Exchange and Its Impact on Global Understanding."

³² Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, "The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research.," in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, ed. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (California: Sage publications, inc, 2013).

from quantifying explicit language to interpreting and describing both explicit and implicit themes, ideas, and patterns.³³ This study used thematic analysis to identify the expression of bicultural identities in Motswako hip-hop.

DISCUSSION

Revealing Discoveries: A Pathway Through Results and Analysis

Hip-hop is a form of profound music, culture, and social activities. Hip-hop reflects the aspiration of young black individuals to restore their sense of self-worth, culture, and identity. The interaction between hip-hop music and its audience can have profound implications for the perception of belonging and cultural ownership.

The researchers during the study realised that ‘Motswakolistas’ navigate between cultures as they find expression in their craft, particularly when there is a collaborative project that stretches beyond the borders of their immediate environment. For example, Jabba (HHP) was seen as the man who was rubbing shoulders with big artistes like American artiste Nas (Nasir Jones). Music paved the way for him, through his collaboration with Nas. The Fresh Prince’s present success as the star of his own Quincy Jones-produced television series is further testimony to his popular appeal. Jabba (HHP) was invited by Washington DC to Bloom Bars tour where he visited schools and community centres and performed his trademark Motswako music at an open mic night with Jaburi Exum. He was seen as a man with a message of togetherness and creating music that cuts across genres, cultures and boundaries. He received the invitation in recognition of his talent as a recording artist coupled with his selfless commitment to serve his community.

Therefore, it can be said that bicultural identity expression in the Motswako subgenre of hip-hop showcases the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity. Through linguistic choices, musical fusion, social commentary, and visual representation, artists navigate their dual cultural backgrounds, creating music that resonates with audiences on a deeply personal and relatable level. This genre serves as a testament to the power of music to bridge cultural divides and celebrate the beauty of diversity.

American hip-hop has served as a model of cultural innovation, inspiring new musical and identity-based movements worldwide. The collaboration displayed here is different from the collaboration in R&B music. In R&B music the expression was based on struggle liberation but with Hip-hop music the collaboration is based on artistic expression, cultural explorations, political activities, and historical revivals, e.g., Jabba (HHP) collaborated with internationals such as Amerie in 2007 in his single music, namely, Music and Lights Lyrics. In these lyrics Jabba (HHP) rapped in Setswana and with NAS in 2009 in his single music called ‘Ke ledimo’. In ‘Ke ledimo’ the basis of the song is Respect me ‘*I am better than you, guys. I can do whatever I want*’. This means that African youth’s engagement in global popular culture has to some extent influenced or shaped the way they identify themselves and the language they adapt to form part of these identities.

Music and Lights lyrics verse 1:

Oh check...
Ke le tlela ka GT, fly like serontabole (Yet)
Another hit like it’s wonderful (Ke botlhale)
Beat you like a Flabbalebole (ke mokone)
Make Tswana fashionable (Le mpone).

Fashionable in this verse is being used to promote Setswana and perceived as a current popular style, e.g., the lifestyle of today in behaving according to the current trend. Theledi indicates that Motswako lyrics provide a platform for language change and deviation from conventional norms and thus trigger creativity in the writing patterns of Setswana.³⁴

Jabba carried the torch at a time when audiences were not as receptive to local hip-hop by going beyond the borders. Collaboration is an important factor in career development within the hip-hop

³³ A. M. Ibrahim, “Thematic Analysis: A Critical Review of Its Process and Evaluation,” *West East Journal of Social Sciences* 1 (2012).

³⁴ K. M. A. Theledi, “Hip Hop Pantsula Making Setswana Fashionable: Impact on Setswana Orthography,” *South African Journal of African Languages* 43, no. 1 (2024): 334–40.

fraternity and that collaboration has encouraged collaborative projects beyond terrestrial borders wherein artists share ideological perspectives and historical experiences.

The Relationship between Music, Culture, and Society

Music reflects the socio-cultural aspects of any nation or community. The relationship between music, culture and society is indissoluble in nature. The researchers' contention in this study is that music reflects society and its habits. Ciftci and Belli postulate that music, encompassing its fundamental genres and subcategories, has played varied roles – progressive, supportive, or definitive – in shaping the social fabric of numerous societies.³⁵ Sometimes, embedded in music is people's way of life and their habits. Significantly, each society has its own musical form that is distinct. In view of this, while hip-hop in South Africa is an emulation of a genre that originates outside Africa, South African rappers have a different style that they use to express themselves in their music. For example, South Africa is a nation characterised by diverse cultures and languages where locals use multiple codes to negotiate their existence, therefore, monolithic expressionism is scarcely embraced. On this background, the South African rap music form is distinct in that rappers musically express themselves in more than one language. Each language used carries its cultural expressions.

In the global arena, music genres such as hip-hop opened up spaces for global resonance. Becker and Dastile explicate that the rapper's creative drive stems from their surroundings and social environment, enabling them to craft authentic songs in their native languages that address pressing issues like poverty and crime, as well as uplifting themes for 'the people'.³⁶ Nguyen and Ferguson posit that hip-hop embodies a language of global unity where individuals collectively create and shape their shared culture. Young people globally are embracing hip-hop as a means to express themselves, challenge rigid identity norms and explore diverse identity expressions beyond those imposed by their societies.³⁷ Hip-hop has become the outlet of cultural expression for younger artists.

The lyrics and language used in the performance create a strong connection between artists and their audience who share a common experience as young people growing up in the townships of post-apartheid South Africa:

Hape Le Hape, Pt. 1 Lyrics

[Verse 1: Khuli Chana]

Look, I ain't got half of Bouga's buzz, but everybody's watching

I ain't said a word, why is everybody nodding?

O sheba kae, you ain't never seen me coming

Number hae so e cale, already everybody is bobbing

I'm a pro, throw a fit if it don't make a profit

50 g's is a show, hey nigga bout to top it

Now hao na nyuku, why you digging in your pockets

Hao na lutho, leave that bottle you ain't gonna pop it

Stop it, se itape, bona I got this

Remind me, first I got to cash this deposit, lefatshe

Ours for the taking

Hao sa le [?] then you'll be a star in the making, lezwente

Pelo e thata, number one C.H.I.E.F Rocka

Khuli Chana, P.H, We ain't stopping

We got a new one, busting and we ain't knocking

[Hook]

We gone' do it

Hape le hape, hape le hape

Hape-hape le hape, hape le hape

³⁵ Hasan Çiftçi and Sultan Belli, "Relationship Between Popular Culture And Music," *The Journal of International Management Research* 2, no. 3 (2016).

³⁶ Becker and Dastile, "Global and African: Exploring Hip-Hop Artists in Philippi Township, Cape Town."

³⁷ Nguyen, and Ferguson, "A global cypher: The role of hip hop in cultural identity construction and navigation for Southeast Asian American youth."

Hape-hape le hape, hape le hape
Hape-hape le hape, hape le hape, till...
[Verse 2: AKA]
Every time I'm spitting, they say this shit is God given
Nobody been official as me in a hard minute
There's plenty of other fish in the sea
But I can get Christopher Reeves out of his seat, when I'm finished
I once heard that Motswako was the family tree
Now we raking the leaves plus raising our seeds
Trust it, P.H, Raw X on the beats
[Verse 3: Zeus]
We gon do it over and over, again and again
I keep coming in, coming to win I keep, I'm running again
Breaking out Setswana sa teng, manate tsa teng
State that I'm in, I see the roster it states that I'm in
Like Bele, first pic; Gordon Igesund
Turn up my mic man, the whole crowd is listening
I'm glistening, and they wish that
I would roll Like A Michelin
New heights from Maf-town
The dope that I'm giving in
[Hook]
We gone' do it
Hape le hape, hape le hape
Hape-hape le hape, hape le hape
Hape-hape le hape, hape le hape
Hape-hape le hape, hape le hape, till...

The sense of identity and pride that went along with rap became available to other people who listened to that music. This attests to the fact that young people admired the lifestyle of hip-hop rappers and also changed their behaviour. The hip-hop attitude and culture grew up with music wherever rap has been performed or played. South African hip-hop has grown to become a dominant force in the mainstream of South African music.

In Yildiz's view, "culture is the totality of the elements, providing the unity and solidarity of society, history, language, religion, art, lifestyle, economy, forming the idea direction, of a community."³⁸ This impression of culture is further emphasized by Geertz's proclamation that culture is something in which feelings are expressed through many facets including language, art, and religion.³⁹ From these definitions, it is quite evident that the art of music carries cultural connotations expressed through a salient language within a culture. Therefore, rappers' multilingual competencies maximises their reach and the message expressed in their music can educate, enhance, or support multicultural audiences.

The Importance of Biculturalism

Hantrais posits that culture encompasses the practices and beliefs that shape the fabric of society, with language serving as a primary means of expression and communication among its members.⁴⁰ Framing switching enables bicultural to fit in with both of their cultural groups, which can benefit them in many ways. French rappers are redefining their sound by moving away from the United States influence and

³⁸ Çiftçi and Belli, "Relationship Between Popular Culture And Music."

³⁹ C. Geertz, "The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays". (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

⁴⁰ L. Hantrais, *The Undergraduate's Guide to Study Languages* (London: London Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research., 1989).

embracing African musical styles, thereby reflecting their bicultural heritage and celebrating their dual identity.⁴¹

Bicultural individuals increasingly comprise a significant proportion of the world's population.⁴² Biculturalism throughout the world has been encouraged by factors that include socio-political change that has increased trade and movements between countries and continents. Bicultural identities have been exacerbated by an increased consumption of art forms such as hip-hop music. In the past, psychologists viewed acculturation as a unilinear process whereby all acculturating individuals would relinquish their ethnic culture in order to adopt the dominant culture. However, currently, acculturation is viewed as a bilinear process, with acculturating individuals facing two key issues: (1) the degree to which they are driven and/ or permitted to preserve their ethnic cultural heritage and identity; and (2) the extent to which they are driven and/ or permitted to participate in the mainstream culture.⁴³

The Power of Music in Asserting Senses of Belonging and Cultural Ownership

The decline of employment opportunities has resulted where in the process of adjusting and coping with the situation, the youth have undergone an identity transformation both at a level of consciousness and in their attempt to find a space in the new dispensation. It was Jabba (HHP) who made it look easy circa 2009 when he started to collaborate with renowned US hip-hop artists who were otherwise thought to be out of reach. On his 2009 album, Dumela rapped alongside African superstars such as Naeto C. and Nazizi. He also collaborated with Nas on his song titled 'Keledimo'. Jabba keeps the flag of hip-hop flying by continuing to work with other artists such as Zubz, The Assembly, ZA, Du Bois Anatri, and a few more.

In the past hip-hop music was undesirably perceived as bad music associated with offensive language and violence. However, in South Africa, the hip-hop genre gained popularity when Jabba (HHP) and Baphexile started to rap in Setswana. South African black youth like any other youth across the world live in an environment that faces significant political and economic difficulties. It was from the hunger of young people to express themselves and to give their places of birth, like Mahikeng an identity that Motswako was born. Botlhokwane states that Bophuthatswana's homeland was a mecca for talented artists but the chaos of the transition to democracy in 1994 left a generation starved for platforms of expression.⁴⁴ Apparently, Motswako music started in Botswana but it was in the streets of Mahikeng (previously known as Mafikeng) that Motswako gave the small town and province a chance to rally behind something, that is inspired cultural insurgency against the Western influence on South African hip-hop. The problem of transition from homelands to democracy in 1994 left a generation starved for platforms of expression but Motswako inspired against the Western influence on South African hip hop. Hip-hop artists speak loudly about the communities from where they come from. Hip-hop became the mouthpiece to command against social ills and injustices when locals could not freely express themselves. Hip-hop serves as a powerful medium for marginalised communities, giving voice to those who have been silenced and speaking the truth about the injustices that have been ignored.

Jabba (HHP) makes a plea to citizens of South Africa in his Mmabatho song released in 2015. His plea is for South Africans to border themselves with acquainting themselves with the history of Mmabatho (Mother of the people). Here the artist is concerned with the history of his hometown, which was renamed Mahikeng (formerly known as Mmabatho). Through his lyrical expression the artist comments on his history perhaps as a strategy to place himself within the history of his own people. In another educational track, Jabba (HHP) asks a very important question in his song titled "Go diragalang" translated as "What is happening." Jabba (HHP) is troubled by the reality that the country is losing its youth to AIDS-related illnesses. Many families have collapsed at the hands of the AIDS epidemic despite the country's efforts to bring awareness about the seriousness of the virus. Jabba (HHP) says:

When alone look up and ask yourself go diragalang
To lefatshe la borarona batho le naganang

⁴¹ Scooter Pégram, "Rhymin'to (Re) Discover One's Africanité: How Racism and Exclusion in France Is Thematically Inspiring French Hip-Hop Artists to Rap about the Roots of Their Bicultural Duality," *Ethnic Studies Review* 44, no. 1 (2021): 75–95.

⁴² A. M. D. Nguyen, Q. L. Huynh and V. Benet-Martínez, Bicultural identities in a diverse world. In J. L. Chin (Ed.), *Diversity in Mind and in Action*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009). 1: 17-31.

⁴³ Nguyen, Huynh and Benet-Martínez, *Bicultural identities in a diverse world*.

⁴⁴ G. Botlhokwane, "Motswako's Power of the Collective: New Frame," 2018, <https://www.newframe.com/motswakos-power-collective>.

A senyegile meletlo ke kopana ka diphitlho
Ke malwetse rabolayana dilo tse di fatlha leitlho
When alone look up and ask yourself ukuthi kuyenzekalani
To umuzi wa ka baba cela ningi tsheleni njani
Go senyegile meletlo re kopana ka diphitlho
Sonke siyafa and we suffer dilotse di fatlha leitlho.

In this song, the artist is crying for the land of their forefathers. He is crying in earnest, asking what happened to the land of his forefathers. From his observation things are going south and people are living irresponsibly. Jabba seems to be asking important questions about how people have lost their ways. The reference to his forefathers proposes that in the olden days when locals observed their cultures, things were better. Now the situation is dire because people have lost connection to who they are. Jabba alternates between Sotho, Nguni and English language to address the majority of the country because his concern is not unique to Botswana alone. This is a problem that is affecting the entire nation. Jabba in his African hip-hop Blog articulates that:

‘For me man, trap music...
I literally cannot stand it.
I love the music, but I hate
the content, they just about
The same shit, bitches, champagne
And cars that they know they can’t afford.
These youngsters are so disrespectful’.

In a broader sense, Jabba (HHP) condemns the behaviours and lifestyles of hip-hop artists. The indication is that the visibility and popularity of rappers confirm how people perceive themselves, how they look at their culture, their politics, and the social production of wealth. Their collaboration beyond borders did not change their cultures. The messages displayed in their lyrics have cultural references. Hip-hop music allows young black people to articulate a certain cultural perspective. It opens doors for young people irrespective of culture or background.

Collaboration through Expressionism beyond Borders

Bi-culturalism throughout the world encourages socio-political change that has increased trade and movements between countries and continents. One thing that is clear is that hip-hop music does not see or have boundaries. Collaboration happens between countrymen, continually and globally. With each collaboration, artists share experiences that include their upbringing, socio-historical challenges, cultural orientation, and so forth. Hip-hop music considers space, politics, language, and social and economic issues recurring or common themes in their expressions through music or lyrics or even dance. These themes align with similar experiences felt by people across and beyond borders. This shows how music becomes a voice of dissent as well as power for people across borders. Again, cultural expression can create a deeper connection between the audience and music reinforcing the sense of cultural ownership.

Jabba (HHP) was seen as the man with a message of togetherness, which communicates by creating music that cuts across genre cultures and boundaries. He was rubbing shoulders and collaborating musically with the likes of American rapper Nas. This attested that the Motswako hip-hop genre expanded beyond South African borders.

The emphasis here is the pun (wordplay) created by hip-hop rappers. If we look at the core principles of hip-hop are consciousness, revolt, and flaunt. Jabba is flaunting in most of his songs, i.e., he plays with words to be creative. He sees himself as better than the others, e.g., in ‘Bosso ke mang’ and in ‘Ke ledimo’. In ‘Ke ledimo’ he sees himself as above other rappers because he can sing with famous people like Nas and has been long in the music industry. Nas sings about consciousness. Nas is a famous artist and has been long in the music industry so for Jabba to collaborate with him was an achievement. The indication of collaboration and sharing platforms together is that hip-hop music does not have cultural boundaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hip-hop is an interesting site for research. It encompasses anthropology, cultural studies, musicology and more. This study recommends that future studies provide a framework or a conceptual foundation for the manifestation of language ideologies through music in a world that is constantly evolving. People need to take on various identities depending on a multitude of factors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Motswako hip-hop subgenre's expression of bi-cultural identity highlights how identity is dynamic and complex. In order to create music that speaks to audiences on a highly personal and relatable level, musicians traverse their dual cultural backgrounds through linguistic choices, musical fusion, social criticism, and visual depiction. This genre is proof of how music can unite people from different ethnic backgrounds and highlight the value of individuality. Hip-hop music should be paid attention to, taken seriously, and pushed as a legitimate form of artistic expression and collaboration that fosters enduring friendships and professional relationships just for that reason. Bi-cultural identity expression in hip-hop is an intriguing topic that examines how musicians negotiate their two cultural backgrounds to produce a distinctive style of self-expression, especially in the context of the Motswako subgenre. Originating in Botswana and South Africa, Motswako is renowned for fusing regional dialects, cultural allusions, and international hip-hop influences.

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