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Hip hop identity in a township reality.

Describing the social environment of youngsters on the Cape Flats by reflecting on their rap music.

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The abbreviations CV and KD respectively stand for Cindy Vanhoutte and Kim Devos, the authors of the specific parts.

FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Half of the African population consists of children under the age of seventeen (The Guardian). Still, youth culture is treated in a rather stepmotherly fashion in the field of social sciences. However, these children provide us with a lively, popular culture, which can reveal a lot of information about the country that they live in. Rap is, next to Jamaican music genres such as reggae and dancehall, very popular amongst youths throughout the world, not least in Africa. American rap is enjoyed as much in the latter continent as it is in Europe. In African countries, several local rap scenes have emerged, which have not only managed to create a local sound, but can also measure up to the American variant. In each of these countries, subgenres have appeared which all have their own musical approaches and song topics. One needs only to take a look at the hit lists to see that rap music has conquered the world, not only as a musical style but as a whole culture and way of living. Nowadays people can 'spit' rhymes in Chinese as well as rhyme in a Flemish dialect called 'Izegems'. The power of rhymes as a means to express themselves attracts youngsters everywhere in the world.

By choosing rap music as the subject of our research, we will try to get an insight into this particular aspect of youth culture and thus the social environment of the youngsters who are part of the hip hop scene. We were inspired by some articles we found about the Tanzanian and Senegalese hip hop culture, and were convinced that this was an appealing topic. The general objective for us is to gain an insight into the importance rap music has and the function it fulfils amongst the township youth of Cape Town. We want to have knowledge about why rap music is so popular there, and whether it has a prominent place in the social environment people live in. Since South Africa contains an extensive scene and it is the motherland for some internationally known rap groups (Prophets of da City, Black Noise, Brasse Vannie Kaap and Godessa among others), it was an easy choice to carry out our fieldwork in the townships surrounding Cape Town. Although initially it was not clear where we had to start and what we actually had to look for, it quickly became apparent that this topic was a very fertile one.

The general objective of our thesis is to describe (a part of) the social environment of our interviewees, by means of the rap music they create but more importantly through what they have told us about rap music (rap music in general and the rap

music they make). The concept of identity is also an important factor in our research and is interwoven within the above-mentioned themes.

In the introduction of our thesis we will start by describing the fieldwork we performed and the methodology used for our overall research. This part contains the setting of our research as well. We will provide the necessary background information of the sites where our interviewees live and the history of hip hop in Cape Town. A brief overview of apartheid is given as this is a vital part of South Africa's history and this information is very much needed to analyse our data in an accurate way. The second chapter is a focus on the language our interviewees rap in, and the reasons for those choices. The third chapter covers the topics they discuss in their lyrics and the messages and goals that result from it. In the fourth chapter we examine the way our interviewees position themselves towards the phenomenon of gangsta rap. In the fifth chapter we will concentrate on the speech of our interviewees and the way they make use of language to '(re)define' their identity. The synthesis of our research puts all of the latter information together and links up the different topics we have discussed in previous chapters. To conclude our thesis, we consider what there is to be found out about the social and cultural environment of our interviewees.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Fieldwork: Explanation

1.1. Preparation and realisation

Several months before travelling to Cape Town there was time to make general preparations for the fieldwork we were going to carry out. There were various seminars held by Professor Jan Blommaert wherein he instructed us about some general topics applicable to South Africa. He directed us to applicable literature to build up a theoretical framework for the thesis. As we had already had a course about fieldwork and had also conducted some practical fieldwork in the second year of our degree course, the methodology aspect was known to us. We draughted the fundaments for the thesis we had to write after our visit, allowing for changes dependent upon the coming research.

While in Belgium, we contacted two people via e-mail who were active in the hip hop scene of Cape Town (Fletcher from African Dope Records, an independent record label and Crosby Bolani, a rapper from Gugulethu). They assured us that they were willing to help us upon our arrival in Cape Town.

In the period between the 15th of July 2005 and the 8th of October 2005 we conducted fieldwork studies in areas of Cape Town, South Africa. Upon our arrival, our primary task was look for interviewees. This went quickly and smoothly using our two contact persons (as mentioned above). Crosby guided us to several fellow rappers in Gugulethu who became the largest source for interview material. Tia, a student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) who attends courses at the Brown Paper Studio got us in contact with Mr. Fat from the well-known Cape Town based rap group Brasse Vannie Kaap. Mr. Fat helped us by introducing us to people he knows within the hip hop community. After a couple of weeks, we gathered a whole network of rappers enabling us to commence our research. These people were very helpful for our interviews.

Another group of interviewees were people we met during our stay, and who could provide us with all kinds of information useful to our research. We paid several visits to the Resource Centre (located in the Artscape Performance Centre of Cape Town), where staff members (namely Bradlox and Monishia) informed us about the hip hop events they organise throughout the year. Both of them are active participants of the scene in the form of rappers. Through Mr. Lyners, a teacher at

the Hoofweg Primary School in Wesbank, we met Clinton Cerf who is a cameraman and a producer of hip hip documentaries. We also got in contact with Adam Haupt, a lecturer at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He is the author of several articles and papers on hip hop. UCT has a radio station with a weekly rap music program. We were invited, by DJ Eazy, as guests of the 'G.H.E.T.T.O. P.I.M.P. show' (the abbreviation stands for Giving Healing Education Through Teaching One Principles to Improve Mental Position). Eazy is also one of the founders of the Faculty of Hip Hop, an organisation that promotes positive hip hop and has the function of a resource centre to people who want to start doing music, bring out a record, take breakdance lessons and so on.

During the weekends, there were several performances (Zula Bar, Cool Runnings, Chilli on Long, Marvel's) and hip hop events (Hip Hop Indaba, Heritage Festival). They took place in different areas of Cape Town, but mostly in the area around Long Street, where a lot of bars and clubs are located.

It did not take much time before several people knew the purpose of our stay. That helped to open a lot of doors as more people spontaneously approached us. People gave us information about coming events, told us they were active in the scene and wanted to be part of our research. In quite a short space of time it seemed that we had become part of the Cape Town rap scene.

In order to make sure we would not waste or forget any information, we kept a fieldwork diary, so when back in Belgium any details could be looked up again. Our previous fieldwork experience taught us that important things can come from seemingly trivial details.

The actual outcomes of our fieldwork were diverse but useful. Once back in Belgium we narrowed down the topics we wanted to discuss. After this we started our analysis and interpretation resulting in this thesis.

1.2. Methodology

Our methods of data collection consisted mostly of interviews with open, fixed questions recorded using an MP3-player. All the interviewees knew that they were going to be interviewed in advance, they also knew it was going to be recorded and that we were going to use this information to help create a thesis. They all gave full permission by signing consent forms approved by the UWC. Questions differed depending on the sex of the interviewees; there was one series of questions for male rappers and one for female rappers. The difference between the two series is to be

found in the questions *about* female rappers. During several formal and informal events we also videotaped performances of rappers, DJs and breakdancers.
The information from interviews was processed by transcribing these conversations. Since the content of the interviews is more important to us than the way interviewees say things, we limited the transcriptions to a reproduction of what they said without doing a thorough conversational analysis.
We consider the methodology a well-balanced mix between active participation in the Cape Town rap scene and participant observation during events and informal happenings.

1.3. Interviewees

Full Stop is eighteen years old. Up to 2000 he lived in Gugulethu, then moved to Heideveld when his mother bought a new house. He still spends most of his time in Gugulethu amongst his childhood friends. He is in his final year of high school at Cape College concentrating on business studies.
He has been aware of rap music as long as he can remember, but from 2003 he began to pay more attention to it. A year later he started to write his own lyrics following inspiration from singing along to Zola's[1] music, hoping that some day people would be singing his words. After seeing a performance of Bad Luck and Redondo from Driemanskap in Gugulethu, he was enthralled by the wild reaction of the audience; he realised that his ambition was to create music which would produce the same kind of response, and so set to writing more songs. He formed a personal relationship with Bad Luck, Redondo and El Nino (the members of Driemanskap). It was not long before they invited him to their performances, and then to perform alongside them. He is now accepted as one of their feature performers. Shortly before interviewing him, he had met some other keen, unknown rap artists in Gugulethu, and was considering forming a new group with them to further his ambition.
He finds that hip hop allows him to express his inner feelings, which he can then share with his audience when performing on stage. He thinks that his music is a contrast to another popular South African music form kwaito[2], citing an example where the same verse is repeated throughout the song: 'Give it, give it, give it to me'.

[1] Zola is a very famous kwaito star in South Africa. Kwaito is a typically South African music genre that is very popular amongst predominantly black youth. It is based on house music, but the tempo is slowed down and African percussion is added. Lyrics are rather shouted or chanted over the lyrics, than they are sung or rapped.
[2] See footnote 1

There is no further message in the song, if any at all. When Full Stop performs, his main goal is to tell his audience something, and that they will go away remembering his messages.

> *"(…) / there's no message there's no there's nothing / I mean but when I go up on stage I would like my main aim is to go up there and when the minute I come down the people who are listening lust have grasped something must have heard something that I wanted to tell them / so that's yeah so that's what attracts me to hip hop."*

Shaun is twenty-three years old and was born in Gugulethu, where he still lives. He has left several times to stay with his family who have moved away, but he always returns. He has been attending workshops and classes which cover the various aspects of music business.

He started listening to rap music in 1995, and by 1998 was writing his own lyrics, through the encouragement of his friend Zorro, whose musical field was ragga[3] music. Zorro was already established in the local music business, and recognising that Shaun had a talent for lyrical writing, introduced him to several artists, with whom he performed.

He is a member of a group called U.N.I.C., but at the time of our interview, he was also working on a solo album, aiming to have it released in September 2006. The group was formed in 1998, among a group of long term friends who, up to then, had all been following independent musical routes.

Mayja is also a founder member of the U.N.I.C. group. He is also twenty-three years old and lives in Gugulethu. He has left the township several times living in other provinces for a couple of years, but is currently staying back again. Like Shaun, he also attends courses on music business.

He first started listening to rap music in 1995, when he heard the song 'Dear Mama' by 2Pac for the first time. Initially he listened mainly to commercial rap music, but gradually his interest extended out to underground hip hop. He would write down the lyrics from other artists. He would be approached by fellow fans asking him if he could provide them with the lyrics to certain songs, and he could transcribe the lyrics for them. When he was sixteen or seventeen years old, he started writing for himself, but was unable to perform on stage himself. He developed his performing skills through freestyling[4] on street corners.

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[3] Ragga is a subgenre of reggae. It depends heavily on digital equipment rather than on acoustic instruments and sampling is an often used technique. The rhythm in ragga is much faster than in reggae, due to the frequent use of drum machines.

[4] A freestyle is an improvised rap.

Domestically, he finds it hard to convince his family of his future in the music scene. His mother has been sceptical about his interest in music, pressing for him to find a job with a more stable career. Since recently performing at his uncle's wedding and seeing some of his group's performances, her attitude is less negative, especially with the impending release of fellow crew member Shaun's solo album.

X is twenty-one years old living in Mowbray, having spent most of his life in Gugulethu. He left Gugulethu due mainly to social pressures and the poverty surrounding him, both out in the streets and his home environment. He had lived in a small over-crowded house, with a complete lack of privacy.

> *"And besides that it's more poverty like poverty in the streets like everybody tryna get everybody tryna get something / and when there's nothing at all / they end up gonna start eating each other because there is nothing to get."*

His decision to move out followed the murder of a friend and fellow group member in Gugulethu. Moving away gave him the opportunity to find himself; he felt he needed to become somebody, though he did not quite know how he was going to achieve this. He listened to hip hop, and began to think that if he could surround himself within the hip hop culture, this could be the way to realising himself.

At present he is studying mercantile law. He dropped out of high school, thinking the education being offered was irrelevant for what he wanted from life, even though he was not sure in himself what it was he was looking for. Later he attended business school.

He started listening to rap music in 1996, especially 2Pac. Later, he discovered more artists and became attracted to the whole hip hop culture. At fifteen he started writing his own material and became a member of the U.N.I.C. group. He finds hip hop an escape, offering a stage from which to express his feelings.

At home, his mother was not enthusiastic about his passion for hip hop, having a prejudice against rap music with the opinion that all rappers were continually using bad language, and that her son wished to portray himself as a gangster. She is now coming to respect what he has achieved, appreciating the effort he has put into his musical talent, and enjoys hearing people praise his performances.

El Nino is twenty-one years old and has lived in Gugulethu all his life. He is a founder member of the Driemanskap group, established alongside Bad Luck and another person in 2001. In 2003 Redondo joined the group replacing the third member who had left. The name Driemanskap, an Afrikaans word, came about during a freestyle session they were having. They thought it sounded good, and

adopted it for the name of their group. It was not until later that they realised it also carried a deeper significance for them, as it is rare to find a group of black South African youths using an Afrikaans word for their name, as the language is mainly spoken by white and coloured people. Anyone in South Africa hearing the name Driemanskap for the first time would think them either whites or coloureds, so it comes as a surprise to find a group of blacks from Gugulethu. They think that this will go part way to bridging the gap between the ethnic groups.

In the beginning the group was rapping for the fun of it and they considered it a 'cool' and relaxing hobby, until people started telling them how much they enjoyed their music, convincing them to take it more seriously.

El Nino's parents and other family members were sceptical about his music at first, considering rap music as something typically American, thinking he wanted to imitate them. When we interviewed him, he was living with his grandmother, who accepted his passion, has seen him perform on television and heard him on the radio. She feels it is giving him a sense of direction, though she does wonder when he is actually going to start earning some real money through it.

Bad Luck is twenty years old and has lived in Gugulethu all his life. He has always listened to rap music. He did not have ambitions of being involved in the rap scene himself, until his friend El Nino started writing his own lyrics and asked him to try it. Being a founder member of Driemanskap, he verifies El Nino's explanation regarding the group's name. His parents appear to share El Nino's family's views of hip hop and rap. They would prefer him to not take part in any activity which draws attention to himself, and follow tradition values.

Crosby is twenty-three years old and lives in Gugulethu, where he was born. He has lived away in the Eastern Cape for five years with his grandmother, returning to Gugulethu for his holidays. When he was fifteen, he was back in Gugulethu where he has stayed ever since. He had to leave school because his parents could no longer afford the fees, despite his own efforts to contribute by selling peanuts. He really wanted to continue at school, but it was just not possible.

In the early nineties he started listening to hip hop by people like Snoop Doggy Dogg and Dr. Dre. His contact with this music was through the radio; it was not easy to buy records at this time. It was not long before he was introduced to rap music and started writing his own lyrics. He was only thirteen or fourteen, and his lyrics lacked maturity, but it gave him pleasure. He enjoyed to 'copy and paste' lyrics from different artists to form a new set.

In 1991, along with his cousin Zorro, he joined Fabulous Crew, but this disbanded due to the uncertainty attached to this kind of lifestyle and most of the members started working in 'normal' jobs. When Crosby returned back from the Eastern Cape in 1996 to stay permanently in Gugulethu, he joined Chronic Clan. They have enjoyed relative success, once reaching the semi-finals of the Fame competition, and in 2002 being chosen as the best ragga group in the SABC talent search.

Crosby is from a musical family, so finds he does not receive the negative reactions from them compared to most of the other interviewees. His father used to be a DJ, and his uncle was also very much involved within the music scene.

Eavesdrop is twenty-four years old and grew up in Grassy Park. She started writing about seven years ago. She has always kept a diary and enjoyed writing poetry. From starting to write lyrics she was already listening to hip hop, watching video clips and attending hip hop parties. She started to turn her poetry into rap lyrics, without high ambitions. In 2004 she wrote her first performing rhymes, and took the stage. Compared to the other MC's we have interviewed, she started in rap at a rather older age. She thinks that is because men have more support in the field of hip hop and rap music.

Dirty Tale is sixteen years old, and recently moved to Wesbank from Khayelitsha. He started rapping in 2003, forming Dirty Dogs with some of his friends. All the other group members still live in Khayelitsha. His parents are in full support of his musical ambitions; his mother gave the group R 200 to help them record their first song. Though his father is more appreciative of gospel music, he respects his son and the songs he writes.

DJ Eazy is 29 years old. He was twelve years old when he was introduced to the hip hop culture. At that time, most of the rap music he heard was of men boasting about their cars, houses and girls. He grew up in Bonteheuwel, an area where he was not allowed out, even to the park, because it was too dangerous. He occupied himself with his music (no Playstation or computers to distract him – they were either not available or unaffordable). He idolised the people he saw on television, and dreamed that one day he would make it onto the screen. His focus has since shifted, and he is now immersed in the hip hop culture. He is a DJ, with his own show on UCT Radio. Along with the afore mentioned organisation the Faculty of Hip Hop, he wants to break down the stereotyping and stigmas associated to mainstream hip hop. They occasionally release a CD containing local music from people who have sent in their demo discs. He also organises projects in the local schools, teaching children the basics in DJ'ing. In between playing their favourite

songs, he will perform his own acts, finding them a captive audience, as they have already been spellbound by his hip hop DJ skills. It is his opinion that children should not be told what they can not do, and any messages to them should be put across in an entertaining way.

Emile YX? is a founding member of the renowned hip hop group Black Noise. Born Emile Lester Jansen in 1968 in Grassy Park, Cape Flats, he grew up in the apartheid era. At the age of fourteen he became active in the hip hop scene as b-boy (breakdancer) for the Pop Glide Crew. Black Noise have released seven CD's to date, and Emile YX? has one solo album ('Who am I') to his name. The group have toured Africa, Europe and the United States of America. During his life he has met some legendary personalities within the hip hop world: Afrika Bambaata, DJ Kool Herc and Chuck D of Public Enemy, to name but a few.

He was a qualified teacher for three years, but decided he could educate to a wider audience through hip hop. He is the founder of numerous projects and events, such as 'Heal the Hood Project', 'African Hip Hop Indaba', 'African Battle Cry', and 'Shut Up Just Dance'. In 1990 he published the first edition of 'Da Juice Hip Hop and Youth Magazine', directed towards educating young people the elements of hip hop culture and politics in general.

Mr. Fat (real name Ashley Titus) is an MC for Brasse Vannie Kaap, a Cape Town based rap group, with international acclaim. They have released five albums to date, the most recent being 'Ysterbek'. They have performed at the Pukkelpop festival and in the Vooruit concert hall here in Belgium.

Born in 1974, he grew up during the apartheid period. He recalls sitting school exams, while armed soldiers were standing outside the classroom. He started rapping at thirteen and was heavily influenced by Run DMC. He currently lives in Bonteheuwel, Cape Flats and commits himself to his music and projects which help to uplift the local community and the young people living in the townships.

2. A brief overview of the history of apartheid

Since the apartheid era is one of the most important issues that characterise South Africa's past, present and possibly also future, it is necessary to give an overview of this period. Although apartheid was officially abolished in 1994 and South Africa is now referred to as the 'Rainbow Nation', the aftermath is still very much apparent in daily life. All of our interviewees grew up in the circumstances of being coloured or black during a time when it was not 'favourable' to be so. Now, the colour of

somebody's skin determines his or her course of life to a considerable degree and it needs to be said that the tensions between the different groups have not been resolved by a long way; they are just expressed less explicitly than before.
Note that the terms 'white', 'coloured', 'black' and 'Asian' originated in the apartheid era but are still used today, without (necessarily) having the racial undertones they used to have. Throughout our thesis, we also make use of these distinctive features but of course without the negative connotations that were attached to them in the past.
The information given above and below is significant to adequately interpret our data further on in the thesis.

2.1. Introduction

The Wikipedia encyclopaedia[5] defines apartheid as: "A system of racial segregation that operated in South Africa from 1948 to the early 1990s. Under apartheid, the races were separated and black people were denied voting rights within so-called 'white' South Africa. Under the policy of apartheid (sometimes also called 'Christian-Nationalism') black people were only given the vote in their separate black homelands (even though many of these people did not actually live in these homelands)". The word 'apartheid' was used for the first time by Jan Smuts in 1917 (Wikipedia). He was a member of the National Party (hereafter NP) and became the Prime Minister of South Africa in 1919. Some people claim that apartheid was just an extension of the segregation policy of the former white governments of South Africa between 1910 and 1940, but in reality apartheid is more about separation (removal, secession) than it is about segregation (detachment) (Wikipedia).

2.2. Outset and the course of apartheid

During the Second World War, the United Party (hereafter UP) of Smuts and Hertzog gradually distanced and loosened itself from the segregationist laws. In 1948 the Fagan Commission was established by the UP to investigate the position of the black urban population (Vervliet: 35). Black people started living in the South African cities from the mid 19th century on (Ross: 122). After some time the black people were chased away by the white population who did not want to live in close contact with them. So, the black people were forced to settle in separate suburbs

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid

where the many townships arose. The report argued in favour of a solution that allowed for the differences between the population groups without neglecting their economical entwinement (Vervliet: 35). In other words, the report recommended a gradual end to segregation in the cities, which would also mean the system of labour migration would not be necessary anymore whereby the black population was settled in distant rural areas (Wikipedia).

In response to the Fagan Commission, the NP (who took power from the UP later that year) ordered its own commission (the Sauer Commission) to investigate the general policy with regard to the black population (Vervliet: 35). The solution that was proposed by the Fagan Commission was not feasible according to the Sauer Commission. Instead, a system of complete partition was proposed. Different racial groups would be completely separated from each other. The system of apartheid was born as an ideology of fear from a minority to become overrun by the majority. The integration of black people in the predominantly white cities would equal the loss of identity for the whites. Apartheid was associated with the preservation of the Afrikaner culture (Vervliet: 36). Every person was classified depending on his or her race. There were three options: either somebody was white, coloured or black. A fourth category – Asian/Indian – was later added. For questionable cases there was a classification board who had to decide which category was most applicable (Wikipedia). Members of the same family could find themselves categorised in different race groups.

In 1950 the Group Areas Act was introduced in an attempt to geographically separate the different racial groups (Wikipedia). The existing pass laws became even more severe from 1952 on (Ross: 146). Blacks and coloureds were compelled to carry identity documents and were kept away from white areas. They could only enter with a pass, which was only given to people with an approved job (Wikipedia).

In daily life, apartheid led to the segregation on public transport, beaches, swimming pools, libraries, restaurants and so on (Vervliet: 17-18). Apartheid pervaded South African culture as well as the law. The media reinforced the perception of non-white South Africans as second-class citizens (Wikipedia).

In 1955 the Tomlinson Commission proposed a plan to give black people their own separate states that were going to be politically independent from South Africa (Wikipedia). The black population was divided according to their mother language, descent and cultural habits (Vervliet: 18). They would become citizens of the 'homelands' or 'bantustans' they were sent to. The South African government attempted to divide the country into a number of separate states. More than eighty

percent was reserved for whites, with only about thirteen percent divided into ten homelands for blacks although they counted for sixty percent of the population (Wikipedia). Four of them were given independence (see the Tomlinson proposition) but this was never recognised by the international community. The six other homelands received regional self-rule (Vervliet: 12). The ultimate goal would be that all black South Africans would loose their status of South African citizens and acquire the nationality of their homeland. In reality, the homeland policy was not strictly taken. Many blacks lived outside their ascribed homelands because of the lack of an economical basis there (Vervliet: 18). If they wanted to earn money, they had no choice but to go to the white cities.

Several (political) parties began to oppose against the established apartheid regime in the form of strikes and protest marches. The African National Congress (hereafter ANC; established in 1912 to defend the black people's rights) (Vervliet: 21) was one of them. In 1959 some former ANC members set up the more militant Pan African Congress (PAC). They held several demonstrations against the pass laws among others. Marches were organised to police stations where people burned their passes as a way of protest against the system (Ross: 158). On the 21st of March 1960, a crowd of black people assembled in a township called Sharpeville to demonstrate against the identity cards that they had to carry according to the pass law. The crowd (estimates about the number of people vary tremendously from 300 to 20.000) proceeded to the local police station and gave themselves up for arrest for not carrying their passbooks. About 300 policemen opened fire on the unarmed and non-violent demonstrators from which 69 were killed (according to Walraet 72 people were killed) and 186 injured (Ross: 158). Most of them had been shot in the back. This event is recorded in history as the 'Sharpeville Massacre'. After this, the government banned the ANC and the PAC and several members were arrested. Even so, nation-wide demonstrations continued, along with a massive stay-away from work was organised.

After the Rivonia trial (which was condemned by the UN Security Council), Nelson Mandela (the ANC leader) and seven other fellow leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment at Robben Island for terrorism in June 1964 (Wikipedia). Oliver Thambo, also a leader of the ANC escaped the country and lead the ANC in exile for the next thirty years (Wikipedia).

Between the 1960s and the early 1980s the government implemented a policy of resettlement (Wikipedia). People were forced to move to the homelands they were assigned (Wikipedia). Estimates claim that about three and a half million people

were forced to move during this period (Wikipedia). One of the most well known and remembered removals is that of District Six in Cape Town in 1965. More than 55.000 people (mostly coloureds and Indians) were forced to move to new townships on the Cape Flats 25 kilometres away because of the realisation of the Group Areas Act, which gave the apartheid government the authority to proclaim certain areas as 'white', 'coloured', or 'Indian'[6]. The old houses were bulldozed and the District Six area became a 'whites-only' zone (Wikipedia). The site of Sophiatown in Johannesburg was raised to the ground in 1957 to make way for the 'white area' of Triomf (Wikipedia). Inhabitants were sent to Soweto (an acronym for South Western Township).

Violence climaxed again between 1984 and 1988. The political reformations that Botha enforced missed the expected effect. The social position of the black people became worse. A young generation grew angry and hopeless, the future looked bleak. In 1983 a new constitution was established. Coloureds and Asian people had a voice in the policy from then on. Still, black people were left in the cold (Vervliet: 74). To suppress the anger and the resistance from the blacks, armed forces patrolled the towns and destroyed black squatter camps (Crosroads) in 1986. The killing technique called necklacing – a car tyre put around the victim's neck and set alight - was very popular at that time.

2.3. External and internal resistance

Nationwide, South African apartheid was condemned because of its unjust and racist nature. The United Nations introduced several sanctions and called upon an international convention (The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid) (Wikipedia). With this convention it became possible to legally apply sanctions to put the South African government under pressure (Wikipedia). Some examples of (economical) sanctions: investors were pressured not to put money into South African companies, tourism was boycotted and South African sports teams were banned from international events (Wikipedia). Also an arms embargo was established after the Soweto uprising in 1976 (see below).

On 30 April 1976, children at the Orlando West Junior school in Soweto went on strike as a reaction to the language policy in education that forced schools to use Afrikaans in class (Wikipedia). Soon, other schools joined in the strike. On 16 June

[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_Six

a mass rally was organised by the students, which resulted in riots and a violent clash between the protesters and the police. Police opened fire after they were attacked with stones thrown by the children. 566 children died during the Soweto riots (Hector Pietersen, age 12 and Hastings Ndlovu, age 15 among others). The 'incident' triggered a gulf of violence throughout the country, which claimed even more lives.

Although the majority of white people supported the apartheid policy, there were also whites who did not agree at all. In 1955, the 'Black Sash' organisation was founded by white women opposed to the removal of coloured voters from the Cape Province voters' roll (Wikipedia). Covert resistance was expressed by banned organisations like the largely white South African Communist Party (SACP), whose leader Joe Slovo was also an important member of 'Umkhonto we Sizwe', the ANC's armed wing (Wikipedia).

2.4. Time for changes

In the early eighties, the Botha-government realised that things needed to change. People started to question the ideology of apartheid and alteration was necessary to end the international violence (Vervliet: 19). Throughout the years, there was also a modification in demographics: whites constituted only 16% of the total population while fifty years earlier it was 20% (Wikipedia). Some reformations were made: the pass laws were dispensed with, employment legislation stopped being discriminatory (Vervliet: 19), a new constitution was introduced which gave limited representation to certain non-whites but not to the black majority (Wikipedia). Those changes were more a way to clean up South Africa's image towards the international community than it was a 'concession' to the non- white population. This did not meet the expectations of many people and resistance continued. Protest came from different angles. Blacks, coloureds and Asians were still striving for total equality. The Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (a neo-nazi paramilitary group) on the other hand, was against loosening up the apartheid policy. The United Democratic Front (UDF) from Archbishop Desmond Tutu also formed around this time. They requested the abolishment of apartheid and the elimination of the homelands.

In 1986, President P.W. Botha announced that South Africa had 'outgrown' apartheid. A series of reforms was brought into force concerning racial equality among others. Still, police services were heavy-handed in oppressing or stopping

protests; many people were killed causing even more riots. The security situation in South Africa worsened noticeably and many white people fled the country.
In 1989, F.W. De Klerk succeeded Botha who suffered a stroke and passed away. De Klerk started a new series of changes by withdrawing the ban on the ANC, SACP and PAC; political prisoners were freed from Robben Island and the most important laws of apartheid were cancelled. In December 1991 Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) began negotiations on the formation of a multiracial transitional government and a new constitution with equal (political) rights for all the different racial groups (Wikipedia). Clearly, it would not be easy to reach a total consent. All of the groups wanted to secure their position and their rights. Eventually, compromises were made and 1993 was the year that a draft constitution was published (Vervliet: 19) and an election date was set. The new constitution guaranteed: freedom of speech and religion, access to adequate housing, prohibition of discrimination on almost any ground, etc (Wikipedia).
In 1994 the first free general elections were held and won by the ANC with 62,7 percent of the votes (Wikipedia). The NP became the official opposition party. Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president and the first to govern democratically. This was the official (theoretical) end of the apartheid era.

3. Setting of the research: Cape Flats

The Cape Flats, also simply known as the Flats or die Kaapse Vlakte in Afrikaans, is the expansive low-lying, flat and sandy area located on the outskirts of the city of Cape Town.[7] Since the nineteen fifties this area became inhabited, becoming apartheid's 'dumping ground', as the Flats are often called (Wikipedia).

> "Most of the townships on the Cape Flats were established in the 1960s to provide accommodation for coloured people who had been forcibly evicted from their homes in the city bowl and other choice suburbs as a result of apartheid legislation. These suburbs were reserved exclusively for white people (…), while the Cape Flats, on the other hand, became home to the growing population of working-class coloured people." (Watkins: 30)

People of colour could still work in the city, but not live there. It was the Nationalist government's aim to force the coloured community out of the central areas of Cape Town. The government built large housing projects on the Cape Flats, with many people, especially blacks, not having any choice other than to live illegally in this

[7] http://www.capeflats.org.za/overview.htm and Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Flats

area. A lot of black people lived illegally on the Cape Flats, because the government had designated them as residents of the Bantustans, which meant they actually had to go and live there, even though many of them were born in Cape Town. As a result of the forced government relocations, they constructed informal settlements, which is a rather vague word for a gathering of shacks made of wood, cardboard and sheets of corrugated iron (Wikipedia).

All of the Cape Flats communities are until today characterised by different degrees of poverty. The Cape Flats have almost become a synonym for serious social ills, such as a high rate of unemployment, little schooling, criminality, drug abuse and a lack of decent housing. In short, the Cape Flats have all the hallmarks to be considered as urban ghettos.

The majority of the black and coloured people of Cape Town still live in townships on the Cape Flats. Most of these townships are home to coloured people, and only four (Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Langa and Nyanga) are the home of black people.[8]

Gugulethu, meaning 'our pride', is one of the oldest black townships in the whole of South Africa, and is the result of the migrant labour system.[9] In 1958 Gugulethu was established, because Langa had become too small.[10] Most of the migrant workers living in Gugulethu, originally came from the Transkei and Ciskei homelands, where they left their family on their search for work. These migrant workers were accommodated with dormitory-style hostels, where living conditions and facilities were extremely poor. As a result of these poor living conditions, the migrants started to build their own shacks. Later, formal houses were built to accommodate a part of the migrant workforce.[11] Initially, women were not permitted to visit their husbands, but after a period of time, this ruling was lifted.

Gugulethu currently has a population of approximately 325 000 people, and thus is one of the fastest developing black townships in South Africa. The average monthly income is no more than R 1.126 (135 €) (PubMed Central[12]).

The Bonteheuwel township was the result of the previously mentioned Group Areas Act. Most of the people who live in Bonteheuwel were inhabitants from District Six and Diep River and were forcibly removed from these places. Bonteheuwel is a mainly coloured working-class community in which the majority of the people still rent their houses from the state. 40% of the Bonteheuwel population is younger than nineteen years old, hence the youth is a key demographic and social factor.

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[8] http://www.cape-town.info/cape-town-attractions/cape-flats/
[9] http://www.uwc.ac.za/ems/is/somditti/Rep_Gugulethu.pdf
[10] http://www.popularmemory.org/archive3.htm and http://www.uwc.ac.za/ems/is/somditti/Rep_Gugulethu.pdf
[11] http://www.uwc.ac.za/ems/is/somditti/Rep_Gugulethu.pdf
[12] http://www.pubmedcentral.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=471560

The unemployment rate is very high, with an estimated 70% of the population having no job. 40% of the people have had no schooling at all, or attended only a few years at primary school, only 12% has obtained his or her matriculation or attended higher education. There is also a growing poverty, with a lot of households depending on state grants or employed family members for subsistence. 33% has no income at all, 25% earns less than R 1.200 (144 €) per year and 41% less than R 18.000 (2160 €) per year (IJR – Institute for Justice and Reconciliation[13]).
All of these figures, together with the poor living conditions and inadequate access to social and recreational facilities, result in social problems, such as alcohol or other substance abuse, gangsterism, child abuse and so on (IJR – Institute for Justice and Reconciliation).

4. History of hip hop in Cape Town

In this part of the introduction we want to give a brief outline of the origins of hip hop in Cape Town. We did not find a lot of sources to document this overview, nor did we pay a lot of attention to it in the interviews we did. This is rather unfortunate, since we only realised afterwards that this history is a very fascinating matter and it did spark our curiosity just a bit too late. Most of the quotes in this part are from Emile YX?, because we did ask him about the early days of hip hop in Cape Town, although also rather briefly.
Still before the commercial breakthrough of hip hop in the USA, from the mid and late eighties on, hip hop emerged on the Cape Flats in the early eighties, with 1982 as often mentioned year to mark some kind of starting point. At that moment, especially b-boying (breakdancing) and writing (graffiti) were the most popular elements of the hip hop culture on the Cape Flats. It was far more important to gain recognition for being a good dancer, rather than for being an MC, as Emile YX? recalls:

> *"When we started out it was like be famous for dancing / for like being a good dancer."*

The first people who started rapping were b-boys who just rapped the rhymes of famous American rappers, without yet writing their own lyrics.

[13] entire paragraph: http://www.ijr.org.za/reconciliationreconstruction/memoryhealing/communityprofiles

> *"(…) The first groups that were MC'ing over here in Cape Town were like b-boys / [they would] just rapping other people's rhymes from the States that were [chanted] and they were breakdancing too / and then from that day they started writing their own lyrics / (…) / so a lot of the people who were involved with breakdancing became the first rappers." (Emile YX?)*

The first rap groups were only formed a couple of years later, between 1984 and 1987 (Africasgateway) and also according to Emile YX?:

> *"That was the start of most of the like MC's like around about '84-'85 / and then the signing of the deals happened a bit later."*

At that time, hip hop received no airplay on the South African radio stations, and performances remained limited to local musical venues (Africasgateway), so it was a while before the music industry discovered hip hop as a genre.

> *"And then the first group that actually started signing a deal was Prophets of da City / and they were the first in the whole of South Africa."*

Hip hop at that time was predominantly the occupation of coloured working-class youths living in coloured townships (Badsha: 133) such as Mitchell's Plain, which is generally recognised as the original breeding ground of hip hop in Cape Town. Emile YX? indicates two reasons for hip hop being so popular in his community. Firstly, he remembers how their parents listened to a lot of American music such as Motown. When hip hop groups used samples from these songs, they already felt a connection, as it was these songs their parents listened to. Secondly is the fact that in the Western Cape there exists a mixture of races, which is mainly the reason why it was so popular amongst the coloured community. Coloured people do not have a specific identity according to him, which is also applicable to the people who created hip hop in America.

> *"Identity with so called coloured people / they don't really have a specific identity (…) / and that's exactly the same thing that happened with the people who created hip hop in America / ask somebody from the African and American descendant or Afro-American / they've very little knowledge about the African history / so it's a very similar background."*

To a large extent the Cape Flats fit into the stereotype of a ghetto, similar to where hip hop originated in America. In her article, Badsha gives an account of the context in which to situate this peculiar evolution in South African youth culture. In the following quote she considers the consequences of the limitations the

apartheid state imposed before 1990 and how these constrained the development of youth cultures.

> "(…) and it was much harder for youth to plug into the global youth scene and the commodities of youth culture were much harder to procure. You had to go to great lengths to get hold of hip-hop tapes and videos, as well as the other commodities that are so important to developing youth identities such as clothes and drugs." (Badsha: 136)

As already mentioned, rap music was not played on South African radio stations, so one had to be reasonably determined to get access to hip hop material because this was not readily available. In an interview with Patrick Neate, Ready D recalls:

> "We used to get music from pen friends and family who'd been forced to move out of South Africa. They'd send tapes, letters and magazines because you couldn't get the music here. If hip hop did come in it would only be one or two copies and we'd fight over them. One copy would circulate through the whole of the Cape Flats. If one crew got a tape from an aunt or cousin somewhere else in the world, that tape or a copy of that tape or a copy of a copy of that tape would circulate even if you had to press your ear to the speaker to hear what was left of the music beneath the crackling." (Ready cited in Neate: 131)

Although hip hop was not readily available for these youths, Neate states it was still a relatively accessible cultural form, because of the relative economic and political privileges of the coloured community, at least compared to those of the black community. They had to make copies of copies, but did manage to get original tapes via their overseas contacts, which was more than their black counterparts could get access to (Neate: 136). Eventually, the youths in the coloured community could manage to link into international hip hop networks and could lay hands on music tapes and videos, which were illegally copied and distributed through informal networks (Badsha: 136), as Ready D explained.

Badsha states that it was only after South Africa had opened its borders and international trade sanctions against it were lifted, commodities of youth culture in general became more accessible to more people (Badsha: 137). This was also true for hip hop. All of our black interviewees were listening to hip hop from the mid nineties on. We do not wish to conclude from this information that this is because they did not have access to hip hop music before this time. One reason is that they are all a lot younger than our coloured interviewees. They were all about twelve to thirteen years old when they started listening to hip hop in the mid nineties. This is an average age at which a lot of youths' musical tastes starts to change. In all of the

interviews with our black interviewees from Gugulethu, we asked if they agreed with the statement that "hip hop in the beginning was more of a coloured occupation and that it was only more recently that hip hop spread to the black community". The answers we received, can be divided in two groups. The first group have the view that black people during that period did not have access to hip hop and that explains why only later it became popular amongst this population group. The answer we received from Mayja is illustrative for this point of view:

> *"Yeah I think first it was a coloured thing / (…) / the word wasn't spread over to us / it was more of only in this neighbourhood that they spread the word."*

The second group is convinced that hip hop was already spread amongst the black community, but the problem was that they did not have the opportunities to show their talents in this field, with no means to perform publicly. X thinks it might seem that hip hop was at first only an occupation for coloured youths, but he is convinced that they had the earlier opportunities to perform with a platform to show their hip hop skills, which came later for the youths in the black community.

> *"Or maybe I'd say the coloureds were the first to get platform to express themselves / (…) I wouldn't say the coloureds are more privileged than the blacks / but the coloureds are more there than the blacks / (…) like you get a platform to express it / people will think you knew before me / but we knew it at the same time / but you just had you got a stage first."*

Also El Nino thinks that the black community was not given a chance to show the outside world they had a valid contribution to make in the field of hip hop.

> *"I've got groups cats that they have been in this hip hop since / but due to the Apartheid era and what not blacks they were not given a chance / they were discriminated / so that's why coloureds they became in the spotlight."*

Some of our interviewees told us they did not know and could not answer our question, because they were too young at the time to be aware of any changes.

> *"I don't know / I won't lie to you / I don't know / I wasn't there when hip hop was firstly there." (Full Stop)*

CHAPTER TWO: LANGUAGE USE

In this chapter we will examine the different languages that are used by our interviewees in their rap songs. We will do so because we thought it was

particularly interesting that we found, in a short time, people who rap in three different languages - Xhosa, Afrikaans and English - who all seemed to have specific reasons for making their language choice. This was drawn to our attention already during the first interview we did, an interview with Mr. Fat. He started to talk about language early in the interview, without us asking or prompting. It became clear to us, for reasons that we will elaborate further in this chapter, that language was not a neutral subject, rather pointed to a sensitive matter. This assumption was confirmed after meeting a whole group of young MC's living in Gugulethu, who mainly rap in their mother tongue, Xhosa. We thought this warranted special attention, as most of the rap music performed in the South African media is American, performed in English. All of our interviewees were influenced, or were fans of several American hip hop groups, while most of them consciously chose not to rap in English.

In order to investigate the importance of the language issue and find out what language can tell us about our interviewees and the environment they live in, we will start by giving an overview of all of the interviewees' answers to our questions about language. After we had noticed the importance of language during the interview with Mr. Fat, we decided to include a series of questions about language in our pre-determined list of questions. We asked most of our interviewees in which language they write their rap lyrics and their reasons for choosing a particular language. If the language they rap in was not English, we asked if this choice did not involve an automatic restriction of their audience to people who understand this particular language. We made this remark every time to help trigger a discussion about language. We followed by asking if they listen to rap music in languages that they do not themselves understand. We sometimes found that questions about language were not required, as the subject arose while discussing other issues.

As stated earlier we will give the opinions from all our interviewees one at a time, and after, try to structure the answers and comments by discussing the different themes generated. Finally, we will link this information in a conclusion about language and its functions for our interviewees in their rap music.

1. Overview

We will summarise the opinions of our interviewees about this topic individually, but we will distinguish our interviewees from one another based on the language

they mainly rap in, to gain a clear view of the situation. We have interviewees who rap mainly in Xhosa, English or Afrikaans. Of course this classification is somewhat generalising, because some of our interviewees use more than one language to rap in, but in these cases we can point to the reasons why.

1.1. Xhosa

As became clear in the biographies, most of our interviewees were black South Africans living in Gugulethu. Research amongst this group resulted in seven completely useable interviews for this subject. A major part of these interviewees, six out of seven, predominantly use their mother tongue Xhosa in their rap lyrics, along with our only interviewee living in Wesbank. In all of these interviews we explicitly asked questions about the language they rap in and the reasons for making their particular language choice. In some cases interviewees started talking about this language issue themselves (e.g. Mayja and El Nino), but usually we had to ask for it.

Before we start with the overview, we would like to make a note about the concept 'spaza'. Spaza is basically rap music in the Xhosa language, and most of our interviewees living in Gugulethu, occasionally use this term. According to some of them, such as X and Shaun, spaza is a word that originated in Gugulethu. Originally, it only referred to typical small township shops often based in containers. Youngsters would gather around these shops and open a cipher[14] and freestyle, mostly after school. A typical question amongst themselves would be: "Tomorrow spaza nè[15]?", and after a while spaza did not only refer to the place they met, but also to what they were doing there. We did not investigate the origin of this word any further, so we do not actually know this explanation is wholly correct. Shaun told us that everybody has their own explanation as to where the word spaza for Xhosa rap comes from.

Full Stop raps totally in Xhosa. The only English words that appear in his lyrics are usually fillers to join together sentences. He summarises the reasons why he has chosen his mother tongue Xhosa as follows:

> *"I feel more free in Xhosa because that's my mother tongue / I think that's the reason why / because if I would rhyme in English actually my English's not*

[14] A cipher is an informal gathering of rappers where they can show and prove their rap skills.
[15] A frequently used Afrikaans stopgap.

100% perfectly so I wouldn't be expressing what I feel inside in the same way that I am."

Full Stop tells us here he has two major reasons to rap in Xhosa that are closely linked. Firstly, he wants to rap in his mother tongue, Xhosa, because he feels more confident to express what he is feeling using his mother tongue. Furthermore, he thinks that he would not be expressing his true inner feelings if he was to rap in English, because his English vocabulary is not broad enough. In his opinion, this clear choice for Xhosa does not necessarily mean his public is confined to people who have an understanding in Xhosa. To prove this, he recalls a rather successful performance that he did together with the Driemanskap group. After the show a white woman came to him and asked if they could do her a favour by bringing an interpreter along the next time they performed. She had been watching the crowd and observed how the people were cheering, concluding that the group must have been saying good things.

"So rhyming in Xhosa / you don't have to understand what I'm saying as long as you feel it / once you amongst you crew that's like going crazy you also gonna feel that energy that / yo this kid is tight hey / hey I don't understand what he's saying but whatever hey it is he must be you know."

According to Full Stop, one does not really need to understand what he is saying in his Xhosa lyrics to feel what it is all about. If he were in a similar position, he would also judge the MC through observing the crowd and watch how they judge him. Despite this view, he does not generally listen to rap music in languages that he does not understand. He even thinks it is of no use to listen to a song in an unknown language, without having someone who can translate the lyrics of the song. Though his English may not be good enough to be able to rhyme in it, he does listen to rap music in English.

The members of X's group U.N.I.C. mostly perform in Xhosa, but they also have some songs written in English. Through reading X improved his English writing skills, and has a couple of songs that he has written in English, but his writing in Xhosa is better. When we asked him in which language he prefers to write, he immediately started to talk about the local situation:

"Like when you are in a place like Gugs you have to come up with Xhosa because like most people are not literate you know / like if you coming up with big words English words they wouldn't understand what you're saying / and they not gonna listen if you know what I mean / so when you in Gugs you

have to / that's why most cats like that's why most artists in Gugs they just enjoying in Xhosa because when they rap in Xhosa people they relate and they support it."

Most of Gugulethu's inhabitants are illiterate and do not understand English well. He is convinced that when people do not understand what you are saying, they will not listen to you at all. That is the reason why most artists in Gugulethu enjoy writing in Xhosa, because people can relate to it and consequently support it. On the other hand, when faced with a different audience, he considers English as a more appropriate medium. He is referring to multiracial places where you can not start to rap in Xhosa, because some people may feel left out as if he is not including them as well. In that way he uses English to increase his audience, as rapping in Xhosa only creates an audience limitation. This means that he tries to adapt his performance to the public he is performing for, or at least the language he will predominantly use.

When he hears or watches a rap group rapping in a language that he does not understand, he will always give them a chance, because he can always be moved by how they rap and because he can always tell if someone is doing rap music for the love for it. Nevertheless, he admits that he would not spend money on a CD from a rap group rapping in a language he does not understand.

El Nino from the Driemanskap group is one of our interviewees who started to talk about language before we could ask our questions about it. He did this when we asked him what his lyrics are about.

"They've been asking us / why you guys you're restricting yourself? / me I can rhyme in English if I want to rhyme in English you know / but there are people now who illiterate they've never gone to school and people maybe who dropped out / so if we can people who can't hear English / so if like we're not gonna cater for them who's gonna cater for them?"

We intended to confront El Nino with the same remark we made in previous interviews with the other interviewees, about if rapping in Xhosa did not automatically result in confining the audience to those who understand that language. This time it was not necessary to make direct this question, because El Nino anticipated it by telling us that people ask the group why they are restricting themselves, by choosing Xhosa for their lyrical rhymes. Although he can rhyme in English, he does not, because he wants to 'cater' for the people who are illiterate and have never been to school or dropped out, and therefore do not have a deep enough knowledge of English. He does not want to compromise the lyrical meaning

by writing a song in English in order to attract more people to his music, from other and different backgrounds. On this matter, he seemed to have the same point of view as Full Stop. It is not absolutely necessary to understand what is being said, as you can also feel the vibe and the energy produced during a performance. El Nino indicates that rap in Xhosa is still rather unique when compared with the volume of rap that is produced in English or Afrikaans, which also helps to receive attention. He knows that English is often perceived as a superior language, and that it is widely spread all over the world, so he understands why it is often seen as a means to spread a message further. There is another problem he raises the attention to. Let us suppose that he raps in English; does that mean that we, as people who understand English but not Xhosa, will actually understand his lyrics and will be able to grasp the meaning of what he wants to tell us? He can write a song about a certain element of the Xhosa culture in English, but will we really understand the content of the song, since we know very little about this culture? Finally, El Nino also considers rapping in Xhosa as a way to show the outside world he is proud of his mother tongue and that it is not essential to express yourself in English. Xhosa is not an inferior language, but has as many possibilities and capacities as English. Through rapping in Xhosa he expresses his opposition against the idea of English as a dominant and superior language:

> *"Why is it always you have to do things in English? / why you not proud of your own language? / 'cause me I'm more natural 'cause I can rap in my own mother tongue you know I'm proud of that you know."*

On the matter of listening to rap music in languages he does not understand, he finds it difficult to understand what it is about and that is a pity because the content is the most important thing. In such cases it is a matter of finding someone who can explain the song to you.

Mayja is another one of our interviewees who started to talk about language without prompting. We asked him what rap music means to him. For him, rap music is primarily a means to express himself. Although he initially rapped in English, he switched to Xhosa, for more or less the same reasons that have already been mentioned.

> *"At first I used to write in English / and only certain people could hear me / and since I'm here in the locations I mean people are not that much into English / they can only hear English as far as the basic communication / they don't know every word in English / (…) / so I changed to my own mother tongue and the language that the people around me could hear."*

When he rapped in English, only a few people could understand what he said, because those around him did not have a good command of English, only sufficient for basic communication. That was the main reason for him to start rapping in his mother tongue Xhosa, for his neighbours to understand him. He prefers writing in Xhosa, but stressed he can also rap in English. Later on in the interview, we returned to this issue. He referred to the importance of one's mother tongue, because one 'feels' that language more:

> *"So the lyrics like why I chose to use like my mother tongue lyrics was because of / when I say it I say it nice y'know / and when I say it I make sure that when I say it I say it with my own feeling / I actually feel my own mother tongue more than I can feel English."*

Although he claims he is able to rhyme in English, he mentions his limited knowledge of the English vocabulary. When telling a story, he feels you need the right terms and words to describe a particular situation. He knows more Xhosa words, which he can use in a correct way, compared to English, so he can express himself more accurately in his mother tongue. Also, through rapping in Xhosa, he can reach his public more directly. On the other hand, he does think that rapping in Xhosa creates certain limitations. When he raps in English, he needs to rap about things that English speaking people can relate to:

> *"Because immediately when I rap in English / I just have to rap in things that the English people like they relate to the English talking people."*

This means he adapts the content of his English songs, and raps about different subjects in his Xhosa and English lyrics. English speaking people usually do not live in townships, so they do not relate to the subjects that are about the township life. For them he will mostly rap about other things, although he always tries to put in 'some township and stuff'. When asked to be a little more specific about what he raps in his English songs, he mentions model girls and having dinner in high-class restaurants (he calls it: *"The up there restaurants where you have to do things in a certain way"*). In order to sound convincing when he raps about these kind of things, he needs to use more 'uptown words'. Mayja is very pragmatic about this problem. He can not afford to focus on one kind of public only, so he puts in a considerable effort to accommodate different audiences of differing backgrounds.

If he does not understand the language a rapper is using, he will concentrate on the flow and will at least be able to tell if that person is a good rapper or not, even though he can not understand what the rapper is saying. He does think it is a bit stupid if you do not know what the person on stage is singing about, and sometimes translations are necessary.

Bad Luck from the Driemanskap group raps in English and in Xhosa, preferring the latter. Asked whether his audience would not be larger if they only rapped in English, he did not think so. From his own experience he could tell that language was not a barrier for people liking their music or not. When they go and perform in clubs uptown with a multiracial public, they all enjoy it, because they can all feel how the audience responds, indicating it is not really about what is said, but how it is performed.

Shaun from the U.N.I.C. group also chooses to rap in his mother tongue Xhosa. He made that choice because he thinks it is the easiest way to reach the people who actually live the situations he writes about in his lyrics.

> *"Because when I started writing I started writing in Xhosa / so I find out that I think it's the easy way to reach these people living out the situations that I write about / because people around me in Eastern Cape people in skwatta kamps you know / yeah so that's why I want them to understand it."*

On the other hand, he and his group also make music just to dance to, and in that case, lyrics and messages do not really matter.

> *"On the other side there's music to dance to it's not about you know it's not about lyrics and message and stuff it's all about like dancing."*

To illustrate, he mentions situations where people could not understand what he was saying, but they would still come to him and compliment him on the way he raps and his flow, because they could see he is doing it with his heart and with a lot of passion. Although they do not understand his lyrics, they do feel it.

Dirty Tale is a youngster living in Wesbank, and is not part of the group of acquaintances quoted above. He raps in Xhosa, which is his mother tongue, and in English. He raps in Xhosa, because he is 'a Xhosa person' and wants to touch the people and wants them to feel he is connected to them. But he recognises English as an international language, which brings us to the reason why he uses it as a second language in his lyrics. He feels he has to use English, for it is an international language.

"I am a Xhosa person / I wanna touch the people / so they don't feel like I'm not connected to them / and as for English is an international language / so I have to use it."

1.2. English

We only interviewed three people who rapped almost entirely in English, and with only one of them we had an extensive discussion about language. Crosby also lives in Gugulethu and is situated in more or less the same scene as our interviewees mentioned above. The other two MC's are from different backgrounds.

Most of Crosby's songs are in English, but he does have some songs in Xhosa. Mixing the two languages in one song rarely happens when he raps. The songs that are entirely in Xhosa are not his rap songs, because he prefers to sing in Xhosa, rather than to rap in Xhosa. He says that by doing so, he reaches the people much quicker, because there is also the melody that can catch their attention. Nevertheless, the reason why he predominantly uses English, is because he is looking to a broader market. He wants his music to be sold beyond South Africa, because here there is still a lot of poverty, and when his music is not released by a major label, it is not possible to sell in large numbers, so making money out of it. When he uses English, not only is it easier for us to understand, but also for people in other African countries.

"So when you do stuff in English it's easy for you guys to understand / it's easy for another fellow African to understand."

He is not against rap in Xhosa, but he states clearly that he makes music for the world, not only for South Africa.

"It's not about it's not like being against rapping in Xhosa / but it's about considering the fact that you doing music for the world not for South Africa / that's why I say twenty percent will be Xhosa in my songs and I will sing for my people to hear it's not that I can't rap in my language / I can write in my own language / but I look on a bigger market."

From time to time he uses Xhosa in his songs, just to show his people that he is able to write, rap and sing in his language. Eventually, he wants his music to be distributed in other parts of the world as well, because he wants to share his views

to more than just his people. Not only this would make him limit his views, but also himself.

The next person writing exclusively in English, is the young female coloured MC Eavesdrop. She speaks two languages, English and Afrikaans, but never doubted to rhyme in English, because it is her favourite language. She has never actually considered sitting down to try to write in Afrikaans, because she can only speak the slang and street Afrikaans. For her, it is an additional advantage that English gives access to a broader audience. Wherever one goes in the world, there is a chance that people speak or at least understand English. She does not know where she could go to, apart from South Africa, if she wrote in Zulu or Afrikaans:

> *"You do get a greater a greater audience I think / it would be different and nice if you can rap in many languages / but for me personally I just because those are my two languages and English is the one that I've chosen to rap in that's just / and wherever you go in the world if you rap in English people probably tend to want / they can understand you / where's I had to go maybe to America and rap in Afrikaans they'd be like huh? / or if I go to Europe maybe if I rapped in Afrikaans certain part of you would understand me / but I don't know but if I could rap in Zulu I don't know where else I could go / over the African continent probably but maybe I'm not."*

Emile YX? from the hip hop group Black Noise also points at the international capacities of English. From time to time, he writes in Afrikaans, with some songs written partly in English, having some verses in Afrikaans. Most of their songs are in English, because English is a language that is widely understood, unlike Afrikaans, although he thinks this is an unfortunate situation.

> *"So there's a couple of tracks that have like a mixture / maybe one or two verses in Afrikaans / but is like yeah change / because most of the songs is English 'cause I always you know / the majority of the people that listen to our music also when we perform overseas / I think English is widely understood unfortunately so."*

His first concern is to make sure that people understand what he is saying. He thinks it would be beneficial if he was able to adapt the language that he uses for all kinds of different places. It makes perfect sense for him to rhyme and get his message across in different languages depending on the place where performing. If he was able to speak other languages, he would do that, but it is just not possible to accommodate everybody.

1.3. Afrikaans

Mr. Fat is our only interviewee whose lyrics are mostly in Afrikaans. He started to talk about the language issue himself, because his group Brasse Vannie Kaap (hereafter BVK) is quite a pioneer when it comes to rap in Afrikaans. They started only two years after apartheid in 1996, and Mr. Fat recalls how everybody was still entrapped in the idea that English was 'god', i.e. a superior language, and that any other language was taboo. So they have shown a lot of self-belief, sticking to their plan of rapping in Afrikaans – the Afrikaans from the Cape Flats, also called 'gamtaal'. BVK is rapping in the ghetto code, and going against the idea from the 'so called white Afrikaners' that their Afrikaans is the pure Afrikaans.

> *"Because we must remember that the so called white Afrikaners actually believe that their Afrikaans is the pure Afrikaans / so if you coming with dialect or so forth it sounds like you infiltrating their language / which is a lot of bull crap / because they are actually infiltrating our language / because that's why we call it ghetto code you see / because there's a lot of stuff that we can speak in our language that they don't understand / and whatever they will speak in front of you / you'll understand clearly."*

In their Cape Flats slang Afrikaans, they can talk about a lot of things, which a white Afrikaner will not understand. The opposite is not true; whatever a white Afrikaner says in Afrikaans, they will understand.

> *"(…) Everybody was happen to be American / everybody was happen to do this / so it was like they put us where us actually tap on the door and say hell no / other people are doing it in English / so it's more identity thing you see / accepting who you are / not trying to bend for the sake of other people / and not the sake of like let's rap English because it's a world thing or whatever."*

BVK started rapping in English, but then decided to change. Everybody around them was already rapping in English and trying to imitate the American style. Therefore, they decided to start rapping in Afrikaans, because they considered this as a statement of who they are – a kind of identity issue. They did not want to compromise because English happens to be a world language. They frequently have to answer the questions as to why they rap in Afrikaans and if they do not think their language choice will trouble them overseas, because many people will not be able to understand them. When they came to Belgium, people could partially understand what they were saying, but that was not the case for France. They have considered touring abroad with an English show, but they convinced themselves of the universality of their music, and so continue to use Afrikaans.

2. Findings

When we examine the replies, there are some ideas that return a couple of times throughout the discussions from several of our interviewees. In this section we will structure and discuss these ideas.

Firstly, there is the idea that using your mother tongue to express yourself is the most natural choice you can make. Full Stop, El Nino, Mayja and Dirty Tale have all decided predominantly to use their mother tongue, Xhosa, in their lyrics, feeling they can express themselves more easily and freely by doing so, more than in a second language learnt later on in life. Since rap music is, for a considerable number of our interviewees, a major means to express themselves to the outside world, this is not a minor consideration.

The idea that every person has one mother tongue that is intrinsically linked with who you are, is not uncommon. It is a strong and widespread language ideology that dates back to a Herderian vision on language. In brief, this view assumes that the essence of a nation is to be found in its national language. Every human being is part of one culture and, thus, has one mother tongue. A difference in language, immediately involves a difference in culture. This idea was also to be found in the Bantustan politics during the apartheid era. Next to the racial classification, the government also imposed an ethnic differentiation. 'National African states' were created, as a compromise for the increasing political complaints of the African population, while power was consolidated in white hands. The African population was subdivided into nine ethnic groups, each awarded a homeland. This whole operation was based on the ideology of the inequality between races, so a separate development was justified.

Full Stop and Mayja indicate in this context that their limited knowledge of English is not enough to be able to express every single detail they want to. Although all of our interviewees speak English and talk it relatively fluently, they are convinced that their vocabulary is not broad enough to express everything they want to say in their lyrics.

We also noticed a sense of pride when it comes to rapping in their mother tongue. They want to show that Xhosa is not inferior, that you do not need English to express yourself or to be successful in life and in the things that you are doing. This is certainly the case for rap music, as most rap music is in English and it is rap in English that is mostly displayed in the media. One can say it is some kind of

statement to rap in Xhosa, certainly that from the mid to late nineties, rap in Afrikaans also became popular. Mr. Fat, who raps in Afrikaans, considers rapping in Afrikaans as a statement: a way to show the outside world who he actually is and where he comes from. For him, this is a matter of being proud of your own language and to show that English does not need to be the dominant language. Rapping in Afrikaans is showing the world who he actually is, which is an argument that shows resemblance with that of the mother tongue as the most natural language to express yourself in. He also mentions the difference between the Afrikaans that the white Afrikaners speak and the Afrikaans that people in the townships speak. He insists that these two varieties do not totally overlap.

The second reason that was mentioned during the interviews is connected with the reasons why they choose to rap in the first place, next to expressing themselves, namely spreading a message. The choice for the mother tongue, especially for the MC's who rap in Xhosa, is closely linked with the situation their main audience is living in. Some of our interviewees started talking about their particular language choice, after we had asked what the main topics are they write about (which will be elaborated in the next chapter). Shaun, El Nino, Mayja and Dirty Tale express this view. If spreading a message is your aim, you have to make sure of course that the people you want to reach, understand you. Since a lot of people in Gugulethu, like in most townships, did not receive a full education, they are mostly illiterate and their English skills are not very well developed. So firstly, music is a good way to reach them, because they can not read flyers or newspapers, and music in Xhosa is a good way of reaching them, because that is the language that they speak and understand the best.

Another thing to notice is that, although language is an issue they have thought about deeply, some of our interviewees say that understanding a language is not always absolutely necessary to know what a song is about. This is said by Full Stop, El Nino, Bad Luck and Shaun. Some of them referred to the people they want to reach with their songs as a reason to rap in Xhosa, but when asked if this choice does not limit their audience to people who understand Xhosa, they say that the flow and the energy of a song or performance is also important. This might be due to the fact that people who do not understand Xhosa, are not the people they want to reach in the first place. It is not so bad if they can not understand their message, after all those people are most probably living in much better conditions, so they do not heed these messages.

English is used by our interviewees for mainly two reasons. The first reason to use English is because some of our interviewees want to reach a public that is bigger than the people who speak their mother tongue. Crosby and Emile YX? are aiming at a bigger market than the local one. This is obvious when you look at what they have achieved already. Emile YX? is part of Black Noise, one of the most famous South African hip hop groups ever and has often toured abroad. Crosby and his group have also performed abroad a few times. Thus, they not only aim at a bigger market and audience, their audience for the moment is just a lot bigger than that of their fellow MC's. Crosby uses English most of the time because he does not want to restrict himself to people who understand Xhosa. He will only use Xhosa to show his people that he can write songs in his mother tongue. He has a very clear ambition, to reach as many people as possible all over the world, and he thinks English is therefore the best option. The international capacities of English are also the major reason why Emile YX? writes in it, next to the observation that it is simply impossible to accommodate everybody in their home language. They may think it is unfortunate that English is an international communication language, but they do use logic hoping that their message will not be spread amongst one population group only.

Although many of our interviewees rap in their mother tongue Xhosa, most of the entire group of MC's do recognise the importance of English in South African society. That is the second reason why some of our interviewees use English in their lyrics. They realise that they limit their audience, to a certain extent, to Xhosa speaking people if they only rap in Xhosa, since this language is not spread throughout the different communities as English is. So, mostly the different rap groups do have some songs in English to open up their potential audiences. Depending on the public they are performing for, they will adapt their play-list and will perform some English songs to please, for example, the white people in the audience. Some of our interviewees also noted that the lyrics of their English songs differ from the lyrics of their Xhosa songs. In their English songs they would rather talk about the good things in life like partying, relaxing, enjoying summertime and so on, rather than the conscientious lyrics they mostly use in their Xhosa lyrics.

3. Conclusion

There are two major things we can conclude about language when we consider this information. The first thing we have observed is that there is a direct link between

the public they write and perform songs for and the language they use in their songs. They use a certain language to increase their audience, or, on the contrary, to reach a very specific public. This immediately leads us to the link between language and the environment they live in. If you want to spread a certain message to the people around you, you need to make sure they can understand it. If most of the people around you have not been to school and do not have a thorough knowledge of English, you will not be able to get across your message to them. On the other hand, if you want to reach as many people as possible, English might be an option, since this is a communication language spread over the entire world.
Secondly, there is a link between the choice for a certain language and the topics that they deal with (which will be the subject of the next chapter). If the song is just about having a good time, it is less important to use the language your main audience understands best.

CHAPTER THREE: TOPICS, MESSAGES AND GOALS

This chapter focuses on the topics our interviewees process in their lyrics. Since the song themes predominantly coincide with the message our interviewees want to spread and with the general goal they want to reach with their music, all of these things will be examined at the same time.

The reason why we discuss the topics, is because this is a perfect manner to explore the way rappers in Cape Town see the environment they live in, and how they want to make an impact on it with the music they produce. It was astounding that almost every one of the interviewees gave similar replies to the questions we asked about the content of their lyrics. To make this clear, we will start by taking a look at the answers the interviewees gave us concerning this topic. Everybody will be considered and quoted separately, while in the next part we are going to discuss the findings that result from the responses they gave us.
It is significant to explain which type of questions we asked them during the interviews. They were short, neutral and open questions so the respondents could still answer them in any way they wanted. Some examples are: 'What are your lyrics about', 'Do you want to spread a message with your music', and 'How far do you want your music to reach / do you have a goal you want to achieve'.
This chapter ends with a general conclusion about what function rap music has for our interviewees. It can be divided into two parts: the function it has for them personally, and the function it can have for the community they live in.

1. Overview

Crosby found in hip hop a way to express his feelings and a medium to spread his messages across to people. For him it is important to have an outlet for all the things that he experiences around him; past and present. The most important recurrent topics in his lyrics are the social issues people in townships need to deal with, and general daily life. These two topics interconnect; since Crosby is an inhabitant of Gugulethu, he is face to face with the difficult social circumstances. So, for him it is easier to reflect on the problems in the townships because he is not an outsider who sees things from a (safe) distance. Through his lyrics, he criticises the government's approach towards people living in the townships. For example they do not get enough financial help to keep the youths occupied and off the streets.

> *"There can be a solution to the crime to the cause of the pain / the only thing that can decrease crime is the government to invest more money in getting the youth to be active / giving the youth resources computers parks studio's."*

Crosby urges people who live in bad conditions not to give up hope. He is convinced that, in the future, everything will get better. There is just a need for change to

occur, and that change has to come from the people in those townships. They need to uplift themselves and reduce the poverty by becoming a working class.

> *"So that's the kind of revolution / and most importantly to see the ghetto becoming a working class empowerment / creativity productivity you know creating our own products / exporting."*

Of course, not every song is about misery. Crosby also writes about the good times he has, and about all things that men of his age are interested in: girls, cars, parties and so on. It is important to include the fun things in life, and not to drown in self pity.

The main function of music according to Crosby is spreading out a message, in his case a message of optimism and positivity. Music is the perfect medium to do this, since the power of words and music should not be underestimated:

> *"The other thing that I experienced as an artist is that your music is so powerful for instance whatever you say people can follow that."*

> *"You gotta be careful to what you listen to because that can really change your whole life."*

We will take a closer look at what this message consists of. We can state that the main goal is to broaden the consciousness of the listeners. This can also be linked to the language he raps in: English. Because he wants to reach as many people as possible he did not choose his mother tongue to rap in because that restricts the audience.

First of all he distances himself from any promotion of violent or criminal behaviour in general.

> *"Yeah gangsterism is on its own I'm against that."*

There is enough of it already in the place he lives, so the last thing he wants to do is make it worse. But he also seems to understand what people drive to turn to gangsterism:

> *"Well I know what causes gangsterism is the pressures of life and all that / not being able to afford things and the quickest way is to pull out a gun and put it in somebody's face or point it at somebody and demand something."*

Secondly, he tries to motivate youth to make music instead of hanging out on the streets and selling drugs or doing other bad things. Because of the poverty in the townships, young people do not have much to keep themselves occupied. They get bored and kill time by doing irresponsible things such as drug abuse, having unprotected sex (that can result in catching a sexually transmitted disease or a pregnancy), stealing, and so on. If they are busy with music, maybe they will be more motivated to search for a job so they can buy equipment for example. He wrote a song about his own experience in the music business, and about how you have to make the right decisions if you want to get somewhere in life. The song is called 'Play your cards right'.

> *"I got a song 'Play your cards right' it's about uh well it's like an awareness to people it's an idiom / like a lotta people wonder how I achieve a lot of things I've been flying all around the country going overseas twice in two months time / and the only way that I achieve those goals is by playing my cards right."*

Crosby is also an advocate of changing the 'racial' viewpoint. You can not deny the fact that there are still tensions between black and white, black and coloured, and white and coloured people. He thinks one must not see the colour of a person because the colour of one's skin should not matter. People need to live together as one:

> *"Break the boundaries the black and the white thing and all that and the differences it's not even about the black and the white thing even in South Africa you have a problem with tribalism / (…) we've got eleven tribes and those eleven tribes have got issues they got problems / so it's letting people know that we're one people we're one blood we all on the same surface but different places / (…) if we can unite there's a lot we can achieve."*

When you grow up in a socially deprived area, and you had the apartheid era as a time to grow up in, it is possible and understandable that this affected your self-confidence. Crosby wants to motivate the people by making them feel proud about themselves again and states that it is not shameful to live in a township. The best way to handle those things is to stay the way you are, and see the positive side of life.

For Full Stop, the actual goal of making music is voicing his emotions and giving out a message to the people around him. Making money is not his primary drive, he sees it more as a bonus for something he already enjoys.

> *"I'd like to be known for saying things that people have never said before / and then the money is gonna be the bonus of course / money comes after / but as long as I've spread a message across / I'd like to be known for saying the extraordinary to the ordinary."*

In the interview we had with Full Stop, he does not elaborate greatly on the topics he writes about. He tries not to have 'fixed' themes; everything depends on the moment, the mood he is in the time he is writing, and the things that happened in the past few days. When he is involved in a collaboration with another group (in this case Driemanskap), the song can be a political statement. When Full Stop is writing alone, the song can be about a girl he likes for instance.
The topics and the messages of the songs he brings on stage, depend on the kind of audience. According to him, there is no need to rap about deep, conscious things when your listeners consist of teenagers because that is not what they want to hear at that moment. They have come to see a show and to have a good time. Full Stop also thinks that younger audiences do not know what you are talking about when the song is about the more serious things in life, like for example AIDS-prevention.

> *"I know how to amuse kids / you go on stage you just say something that's gonna amuse them / you can't perform something that's conscious like I mean something that's gonna be deep for kids."*

Another example he gives is about politicians. If he could to do a show for people who are involved in politics, he would not take that opportunity to criticise the system. On the contrary, he thinks that is really 'not done'.

> *"If you probably called to come and perform for this other crowd / there's been a conference at parliament you can't go there and perform a track that's about politics dissing on the politicians dissing all the MP's / I mean you can't do that or you have to go there and rhyme about something that's gonna please them / you must actually like before you perform I actually first judge the crowd what kinda crowd I'm gonna be performing for."*

Full Stop relates to the fact that music has to please the people as you can deduct from the latter two quotes.
X, who is a member of the U.N.I.C. group, sees writing lyrics as a way to escape from daily life. He also says his rap songs have the function of being some sort of diary that is accessible for everybody who wants to know how he is feeling. The things he writes about depend on the mood he is in. It can be about falling in love,

apartheid, somebody that passed away or the fact that the street is not a good habitat for young people. When he has to do a performance, he firstly 'screens' his audience to know which songs he has to include. He also adjusts his songs to the mood the listeners are in.

> *"Say there's a show when I get there I'd see how people feel / right there and then / and do what will they relate to / that's when I know which lyrics to give to them like not to be irrelevant not just come up with something that doesn't fit in / so if everybody's all drunk and happy and wanna dance there's a type for that too."*

X states that the power of music lies in the fact that there is music for every mood: there are songs to listen to when you are happy, there are cheerful songs, and so on.

Although most of his songs are creations 'of the moment', he does put a message in some of the lyrics. One day he realised that he influenced the younger generation that were fans of his music, so he thought it would be good to take some educational topics and convert them into a rap song. X has a song, for example, telling the people not to get involved with drugs and gangsterism, and he tries to show that there is a way out of every situation, motivation is very important. He predominantly uses the Xhosa variant of rap – spaza – to do this. He says this is a good kind of rap because it contains less swearing than some other kinds and it also spreads a message.

The reason why he has more lyrics describing negative things than lyrics about the good side of life, is because of the situation he lived in himself and because of the people he raps for. X thinks they can not relate to positive things because they hardly experience that.

> *"Like living in Gugulethu if you gonna try and rap about nice things and flowers and peaches and cream / people won't get it / but if you tell them / yo I'm suffering / yo my man got killed / there's gunshoots/ and like if you say people perhaps get an idea of what you're going through / what you see / what you've learnt and stuff."*

This viewpoint can be connected to why X prefers South African rap to American rap. He can relate to the things South African rappers sing about because they live or lived in the same circumstances he lives in.

> *"Because they also living in townships in more or less the same townships that we living in / like he talk about guys who getting drunk / and guys who hide*

pills in their socks / guys who / and I really know what he is talking about / more than the guys from the States."

Shaun, also a U.N.I.C. group member, claims it is necessary for him that his hip hop contains a message in any sort of way. Under 'message' he also categorises things as for example being in love and talking about it in a song, because people who hear the lyrics can also learn from that. If they are ever in the same situation, they can think about what Shaun said in his lyrics and do the things he has done. As seen in the chapter about language use, he uses Xhosa to rap, because he makes music for the people around him who live in similar circumstances. If he spreads a message they need to be able to understand him.
Like others, Shaun does not have a fixed list of topics he writes about. When he sees something he wants to write about, he does so. When he has a concept inside his head, he will try to formulate a song about it. He simply makes songs about everything that seems to be relevant for him, and the inspiration mostly comes out of the township he lives in.

"There are a lot of concepts you know / so my music is not basic on / I don't write about one thing I write about everything that's relevant everything that's around me I experience and I see."

Since the conditions he lives in can not be called optimal, it is a necessity to spread a positive message, and to use the music in order to educate his listeners. The spread of AIDS needs to be prevented, and the same goes for poverty and criminality. The system needs to be criticised. Some underground American rappers give their opinion about the system they live in, in their songs, and Shaun says he can relate to them, although both 'systems' are not totally comparable. He mostly prefers South African rap to American rap, because the situations the South Africans are rapping about are similar to the conditions he is in at the moment, though he can get meaning from the Americans' lyrics.

"That relate to me you know it relates so much because situations that they've been to / that's what I'm in now."

Eavesdrop, one of the few ladies we interviewed, sees rapping as a combination of the things she always loves doing: keeping a diary and writing down the things that happen, and singing. Writing songs is a way to cope with things she is exposed to through her life. Her lyrics can be compared to a kind of fairytale she tells the people, but it is not fiction; they are true, real life stories processed into a lyrical

narrative. As such, the songs are entertaining but contain messages. She compares her style with storytelling around the fire:

> *"This is a story from where I come from there and you don't come from there and you don't know about it then I'm gonna tell it to you like we're sitting around a fire and you're listening to someone telling a story / you know I'm gonna make it interesting for you so you can get the whole visualisation so that you can learn to activate your imagination you know / and just kinda see the picture that I'm painting that what I want to do like I like to create vivid pictures of real stories but in a fairytale."*

Like many others, Eavesdrop comes out of a township environment. When you tell people that you come out of a township, you mostly get negatively judged by them. Through her stories, Eavesdrop tries to show the positive side of this kind of life, and she also tries to break the stereotypes people give to the township residents; not only from people outside but those living there themselves. They start seeing themselves in a negative way also, and that is hard to change.

> *"I meet someone who's gonna tell me that you're not good enough for this where do you come from / who gives you the right basically."*

> *"The negative energy they let it take over you know / instead of saying oh forget you I'm gonna keep fighting they kind of just give in and say ah I can't do it so why bother."*

> *"Too much of what we're exposed to is negative and so then people forget that you can do something really good really really good."*

She basically wants to prove that you can get somewhere as long as you have the strength to stand up and do something about the situation you are in. She feels a strong responsibility for the people who do not have enough courage to do so, so she aims to represent them. She tries to give them hope by showing that there is a chance to have a better life.

> *"If I can show them what I'm doing or what they wanna do / so if I can show them what I'm doing and what is possible then maybe a few of them will open up and wake up you know and as opposed to just die 'cause that happens when you just give up on your dreams / you just obviously die you know."*

If somebody can actually state this by actions instead of words, it is easier to believe in. The passion to show people what they are actually worth and the support of her family keep Eavesdrop continuing spreading her positive message. In the future,

she wants to set up projects in the townships so she can spread her positivity further. She wants to give everybody the opportunity to express themselves in the way she does. Young people need to have a space where they can develop their talents and get in touch with the world, so they do not stay on the same level for the rest of their lives.

> *"Because it's needed / so much talent lies in a person and they don't have the opportunity to ever get into it or even realise it so / I wanna try help people get in touch with themselves and just learn more / and help disseminate information / people can be aware of what's going on / (...) because if you don't know what's going on you just gonna sit back and die."*

El Nino is part of the Gugulethu based rap group Driemanskap. He started doing hip hop because he wanted to educate people through his lyrics. Rapping, according to him, is a one way conversation where you put a message across for the listeners. It is a useful means to discuss social issues in a subtle way.

> *"It have to make sense it's like you speaking with people / you know when you're rapping it's like a conversation yeah / but it's a one way conversation you know / it's not a two way yeah so we have to make sense."*

Creating lyrics is just part of a concept for a performance. The members of Driemanskap gather somewhere and brain storm about the lyrics:

> *"We cipher together we battle together / like come through with this concept / let's make a song."*

El Nino gives the example of singing about the Xhosa culture. It does restrict his audience in a way that people who do not know much about this culture, also do not know what he is rapping about. But El Nino does not see this factor as something disturbing, on the contrary, it is a way of bringing people together who share the same experiences.

Bad Luck is the second of the three members of Driemanskap. Hip hop goes together with expressing himself. It is a way to handle the things that happen around you in the townships and in your personal life. For him, it is possible to do a song about a girl he likes one day, and the next day to write a song about social issues such as growing up on the street. It can also be about the dreams you have for the future.

He feels it is important to do something constructive with music; giving something back to the community.

> *"That's what we doing / make sure every single joint we're writing it's a positive message yeah."*

The whole society needs to relate to the songs Driemanskap makes. That is why they have various songs that are suitable on various occasions.

> *"Where you do music you accommodate everybody that's what you do young people old people."*

Bad Luck is trying to change narrow-minded people, so problems about race no longer arise. He thinks now is the time to realise that every person is equal, no matter which colour they are.

> *"I just like the change man change that's out there like people excepting each other for who they are not to what they are because of their skin colour of what language they speak / you know just respect somebody for who he is / (…) we trying to change break that stereotype / that white black oppression thing it doesn't exist anymore."*

The well known crew member and MC of Brasse Vannie Kaap, Mr. Fat, claims not to be involved with music for his own sake. He is making music for the people around him, and he wants to reach several goals with that. Mr. Fat is still living in a township, although he *can* move out if he wants.

> *"I didn't move out / I'm still in Bonteheuwel / I'm still on the Cape Flats / (…) 'cause every year I am saying I'm leaving I'm gonna go somewhere / then people ask me where you're going to / and I'm like no / I'd like to know I'm there / you see but yes I'm there 'cause that place is my sole inspiration / I like it when I sit in the house and hear kids playing outside / (…) and sometimes I think I'm do sentimental / but I don't think there's a better view than opening up your front door and looking to Table Mountain / to shit what a beautiful mountain / (…) so yes I'm staying where I'm staying."*

He chooses to stay so he can continue his quest to socially uplift the people. He wants to help them evolve in a positive way and show them that the place a person comes from does not have to determine their whole identity. For example they do not have to behave like a gangster just because they grew up in a township area, just because the media labels them in that way. Stereotyping is not the way such things will be solved, because it may work as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Mr. Fat and BVK want to educate the people and implement them with life skills. Getting so far and having the same background needs to show people that they can make it if

they want to; Mr. Fat is helping them by opening doors for those who have the courage to follow.

> *"You can't save everybody / you can't save everybody you see / but the few that is willing to move you see / they will stand up you see."*

As already observed, the inspiration of Mr. Fat comes from the place he lives in. So, his lyrics will not be about partying and good times, but about 'setting the record straight'. The group does not want to pretend that everything is okay when it is not, because then society will not move forward at all. They are the messengers of and for the people. Although the status of Mr. Fat in the community is quite high, he does not want to profile himself as a typical leader:

> *"If you wanna call yourself a leader don't let other people follow you / let everyone walk alongside each other / and that everybody can see what's going on and what's coming to / and whatever you do / do it wisely you see."*

> *"And always be humble no matter how big you are you see / always come down to earth / because that is your place of birth that is your existence."*

According to Mr. Fat, first of all we need to realise that sometimes we act more as programmed robots who act and do not think. We are stuck in the daily rut, and let everything go by; sometimes we even forget that we received the 'gift of speaking', and keep our mouths shut. But keeping silent is making yourself dumb and vulnerable.

> *"If you got the mouth use it the way it supposed to be / because we were born with the gift of say yes and no / but unfortunately our people are waiting for the day of the robots when they gonna take over and this gonna take over / while the sad [right] is robots are here and it's in human form / because you get up in the morning six o'clock to get in your car or train or bus / seven o'clock to go to your job and you wait for a siren eight o'clock to start work /(…) so is the procedure for the rest of your life."*

Conversely, it is also important to be careful about what you say, too many people have a big mouth and end up telling lies to impress others. Certainly in the hip hop industry these kind of people do exist.

> *"If you don't know this shit don't talk about this shit / that's why I say a lot of guys talking about gang banging and rolling in my [?] I got the ultimate BMW / then you get them in the taxi like what's up man / yeah it's same thing / yo*

man I've got guns / yeah right show me the guns / that's why I say man too many people talk too much."

Mr Fat's view is as follows: If you are not alert, you fall for the lies, but if you are aware then you see trough them. Basically, just stay yourself and do not put energy in making yourself look better or 'cooler' than you are. If you believe in yourself, you automatically have more confidence so you do not need to pretend you are someone you are not.

Believing in their aims – rapping in Afrikaans (see the chapter about language use) – it was a necessity for BVK not to bend under the criticisms they received. The title of their latest album 'Ysterbek' (now already in stores) is an illustration:

"We gonna release the fifth album now / most probably the month of October 2005 / and that is like authentic Ysterbek / which means iron mouth in English / but the idea is / the name doesn't really mean what it says / there is a deeper meaning behind it / it's just to let you know that you need a mouthful of iron teeth to survive in this industry / and seen that this is the fifth album / it takes a lot of courage a lot of hard work."

Mr. Fat concludes his explanation about the message that is spread through the BVK lyrics by stating that doing positive things is more difficult than it appears, because you can not have good without bad. It is all about making the right choices in life.

"But just remember that there is life after this life / so even if you're gone at least make sure that you made a mark / but a positive mark / don't be destructive / and that is actually the message we are trying to tell out / throughout our humanity."

"So if you tell somebody this is a plus and this is a minus you see / they gonna say okay cool / but at the end of the day the one can't live without the other / because you can't have bad without good / because then you can't decide which part of the fence you must be."

Dirty Tale is the youngest rapper we interviewed. He has been performing music for two years, and the first song he wrote – 'My city and my street' – is about the things that are happening specifically in Cape Town and in Wesbank. One of his latest songs is about the school he goes to. He sees young people smoking in the playground, and skipping class by climbing over the fence. Dirty Tale knows that this is not the way to move forward your life, but other people do not realise that. By creating this type of song, Dirty Tale hopes his listeners will change their

attitude, and live a more positive life. Thus, the things he sees are his source of inspiration.
When he is older and his music and messages are heard all over Cape Town; he wants to set up a project to help homeless children, and to enhance the conditions in his neighbourhood.

> *"Accompany kids / because I see they're struggling in this streets there's more struggling / like day after day it's like you struggle / (…) let's do this you saw I could do it so can you / like we more taking the poverty out of the streets there / there's gonna be street kids / you wanna help those / exactly / that's what I wanna do / those are my dreams."*

For now, by providing himself a positive and crime-free life, he wants to prove that you *can* have a good life when you live or used to live in a township.

> *"I can change the situation like do something good / so people can see it's like / no man this kid is not a gangsta / he can also do good to people / that's the main course of my rap."*

Mayja, part of the U.N.I.C. group does not see hip hop as a one goal perspective. On the contrary, rap music is the perfect means to combine fun issues along side giving out a more serious message to younger people. The latter is very important for Mayja. Spreading a message is a necessity.
He thinks the way to be sure a message gets across to people, is to wrap it up in something amusing; to get people in a thinking mood in a relaxed kind of way.

> *"But being creative and passing a message now that's something very difficult to do / you have to make sure that your audience don't get bored when you saying stop using drugs stop criming / you can't just stand there and say hey guys stop crime don't be a criminal no man / you have to say it in a way that you make the people wanna understand why is this guy saying this."*

As can be derived from this preceding quote, Mayja is against violence and drugs. It is important to know that individuals always need to be who they are, to be themselves. This is when they feel best about themselves, and that lifts your self-esteem. Sometimes it is hard not to fold under peer pressure, and get involved in negative things. Mayja himself had to deal with it at a young age. That is why he incorporated this topic in his songs.

> *"What actually stopped me from going all the way was the fact that I had a couple of guys / who were like conscious guys / and as I used to be like this*

nigga who was like you know not an SA kind of a person I was all baggy and all that / and then these guys used to talk and then they'd be like man why don't you just be yourself man / (…) but as I grew up I actually knew that I have to be my own character I had to stop being like someone else / and just be me."

When we asked what else his lyrics are about, Mayja said the environment he lives in gives him a lot of inspiration. It is also essential that people who listen to his music can relate to it, recognizing the situations he is rapping about.

"Okay our lyrics most of the time they about the life 'bout we lived and the things that's around us in the location / we don't rap about jeeps and expensive cars / (…) it's not about bling bling on us / you know it's all about hey how the people in the 'hood do you know / when you wake up you always sees this guy goes and buy a crate of Black Label and then he drinks / and then he gets to be rightful you know like crazy."

"And then we rap about the guys in our location / guys usually have two to four chicks / you know so we write about those things you know / we just write more about people that people relate to that's why when they hear our lyrics than they like they love it they just act wild."

When Mayja is performing, he *does* adjust the songs he is going to sing for the audience. With some people he can allowed to say more provocative things than with others. The content of his lyrics differ depending on the language they are in (Mayja has songs in English and in Xhosa). People who only speak English, are most of the time people who do not live in townships. When you are doing a song about the hard life people live there, they will not be able to relate to the lyrics.
So, for Mayja it is vital to know who his listeners are going to be at that time.

"Sometimes it's more of you have to adjust / it's more of you just have to be make it fifty-fifty / (…) I should at least have a couple of audiences around me / so that maybe when I'm doing a show I mean probably there's gonna be a whole lot of people from different backgrounds so I must be able to accommodate all of them."

Emile YX? is the lead member of Black Noise, which, together with BVK, a well-known Cape Town based rap group. Black Noise is known for their politically driven songs. The first lyric they ever wrote directly reveals the political agenda of the group, titled 'Apartheid Sux'. Through their music, the members found a way to publicly criticise the system, and obtained the status of pioneers together with another crew called Prophets of da City.

The strategy of Emile YX? is the following: he says you need to entertain and educate at the same time. The group always gets on stage with a lot of b-boys (break dancers) so the public stays constantly focused. In the lyrics and in between the songs the more serious matters are discussed.

> *"When you come on stage and you like all preaching and trying them / they not gonna listen to anything / but if you get their attention / at least you got them open to yeah / that is the agenda."*

The first thing that needs to be made clear according to Emile YX? is the fact that people do not differ much from each other. There *are* differences of course, but these do not have to be considered as significant. A person is a person, that is the main point everybody has to keep in mind.
Since the government is not making much of an effort to push a sense of South African pride with its people, Black Noise took on this task. Children need to feel proud about where they come from and who they are. There is no need to imitate some 'cool rapper' or to become a 'gangster', just be yourself. With this message, Emile YX? also touches the drug issues a lot of (young) people have to deal with.

> *"Like the cause of a lot is drug problems on the Cape Flats / if you take any form of substance it means that you're lacking something / so if you take a substance then obviously what are you lacking? / you lack pride you don't feel full as a person / there is something missing in who you are / so maybe it's the fact that you don't feel proud of who you are."*

Emile YX? has the opinion that saying things without proving them is not enough. Action is required to convince people. That is why the group set up several projects where uplifting the community is one of the key objectives. One such project called 'Heal the Hood', and helps the poor areas by decreasing unemployment. Instead of supporting capitalism and buying things from multinational companies, people must be made conscious and persuaded to buy from their own community. Then money goes back into the community, as the big stores do not invest a cent into the people who buy their products.

> *"We're trying going another route and trying to get people to go to a mentality of starting to buy stuff that's within the community supporting the community."*

> *"On the stage I explain that these big shopping chains that we buy from they never put back to our community."*

> *"More and more of the kids are realising / oh shit I've been buying from this Snoop Dogg and all these fuckers for such a long time / they don't give a cent back."*

His view on capitalism goes well together with the concept of Ubuntu:

> *"In Africa there's a philosophy called Ubuntu / and Ubuntu is about I may be because of others and what others do affect me and what I do affects him / so for me capitalism doesn't fit well with the concept of Ubuntu / because it's a handful of people manipulating oppressing the majority."*

Black Noise realises that not everybody is immediately going to follow them in the things they say; these things need time. People need some proof that what they are saying and doing is making both sense and a difference.

> *"Like because of the amount of people that we can obviously affect with we speaking to / and also what you up against / like we don't expect miracles to change everybody overnight / like if we can change one or two kids perspective of what they're doing / then I think part of the agenda is being achieved."*

2. Findings

2.1. Recurring topics

Most of the rappers or rap groups have two kinds of topics: there are songs about fun times, and there are lyrics about the more serious matters in life. The first type of songs are generally played when they perform for an audience wanting to party and dance. Then singing about girlfriends, friendship, good times and so on is appropriate to the situation. Many of our interviewees are convinced that singing about more conscientious things does not fit into that kind of atmosphere. People are not open for the deeper lyrics then, so it is better to keep them for more suitable occassions.

There are only a few of our interviewees who mentioned the topic of 'politics'. Reasons for this minimal interest can be found in the fact that it is difficult access the serious forms of media in the township areas. It is only logical that they can not write about things they do not have a good understanding of, and bringing us to the finding that most interviewees only write songs about matters that happen around them. Their social environment does not stretch beyond the neighbourhood they are living in, mobility still is a big problem in Cape Town. Public transport is unreliable

and restricted, most of the (taxi)buses stop driving after five o'clock in the afternoon. Owning a car is very rare given the high poverty in the townships. So the only things they *can* talk about, are the social issues that arise in their own environment, the townships.

Topics relating to this are poverty and living in bad social circumstances, drugs abuse, the temptations of crime and gangsterism, AIDS, etc. The fact that people who come from the townships are automatically stigmatised in daily life is discussed in several song lyrics. Chances of being 'successful' on any level are dramatically reduced when you originate from a deprived area.

Concerning the topics, we can conclude that the rappers do not have a wide spectrum of themes to discuss in their songs. This can be explained by the fact that their inspiration has mostly come from experiences from their own life. Since they are limited in many ways, that life consists of few different things and places. As a consequence, the source of inspiration they have at their disposal is rather confined.

2.2. Messages and goals

Although the majority of the topics have negative connotations, the messages that come out are all positive. This shows that they do not reconcile themselves with the situation they are living in, because they do not want to be stuck in the same place for the rest of their lives. Trying to be successful in the music business can be one way of getting away from the townships. If they are able to make money from of the songs they produce by performing or selling CDs, they have more possibilities to find a more comfortable place to live for their family. Being financially independent through making music is not the main goal for all though. It would be a bonus, but the rappers seek higher and less materialistic achievements than that.

Since the interviewees are telling their audience about the conditions they live in, they want to make sure that everybody realises how hard it is to grow up in townships. They use this fact to give people strength so they can personally change the situation. The rappers who live in the townships and have already gained some status through their musical careers are living evidence that one can be successful no matter where one comes from. Because of the standing they have in the community, the rappers can be a role-model for the younger generations, making it easier to pass on their positive points of view.

They are giving advice through the messages they are spreading by saying what is good for you (gaining self-confidence, sticking to who you are, having a positive attitude towards life, educating yourself) and what is not (getting involved in crime, using drugs, having unprotected sex). It is important that these messages are not presented in a boring way. If they want the people to listen to the advice they must entertain them at the same time as they are 'educating' them. Rap music can be seen as a perfect medium to do so.

The main goal for all the respondents is to create a better life in general. That starts by changing attitudes first. If that objective is achieved, then it is time to do something about the surroundings. Poverty in the townships could be reduced by making these communities self-sufficient. The system in general needs to be changed. If the government would make more of an effort, there would not be as much misery. To be able to get this done, people who are in such situations need to be heard, and that is where the music comes in. Rap music again is a good medium to make clear what the needs and concerns are of people who otherwise do not get a voice. With regard to the messages and goals, we can say that they are all about positivity and uplifting the community in every possible way. Personal gains are rarely a goal, rather a plus. Our interviewees can be categorised under the denominator of 'conscientious rappers', who use the medium of music to open the mind of their public and to make change happen.

3. Conclusion

Assessing the data and the findings, we can conclude two things concerning the threefold theme of this chapter.

Firstly, making rap music can have the personal function of expressing yourself. It can be a kind of public diary, where the listeners can find out more about the rapper's life through listening to the lyrics written. The topics the rappers write about depend on the mood they are in and the things they experience in their life.

Secondly, rap music can also have a function for the community the rapper is a part of, and for the whole society in general. Since positive messages are spread through the lyrics, rappers help build up a constructive attitude for the young people. Negative things get criticised in the songs, so music serves as the notice board for problems that need to be addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR: GANGSTA RAP

A section of our questions concerned American rap music and more particularly what is commonly called gangsta rap. Gangsta rap is a subgenre of rap music, distinguishable by its often sexist and violent lyrics that deal with the rough living conditions in the American ghettos, containing gang life, violence, criminality and drug abuse. These lyrics are rather provocative and have contributed to the popularity of the genre, also amongst white middleclass youths whose lives are removed far away from the mentioned topics. Through the expansion of its

audience, in the mid nineties, it has been the subject of controversy and concern with parents and politicians alike, especially in the United States of America.
In the last few years there has been a shifting focus in gangsta rap, from an emphasis on the gangsta element to that of a hedonist lifestyle. Switch on MTV and there is a huge chance that you will see what we allude to: rappers showing off their cars, women and jewellery (not necessarily in that order). This evolution is partly due to the fact that rap music has become more part of the mainstream musical landscape.
There no longer exists a precise definition as to what exactly gangsta rap is, often leading to discussions within the hip hop and rap community. We want to make clear that the search for a definition is beyond the scope of this dissertation, so we will not pursue this matter. When we refer in this and previous chapters to gangsta rap, we mean the 'original' gangsta rap, as well as the more hedonistic contemporary variety. We are under the impression that, through considering their answers, our interviewees also thought the same way as us in our meaning of the word.
The reason we asked questions about this matter is because what we consider in Europe as gangsta rap is very popular these days. Everybody knows rappers such as 50 Cent and Snoop Doggy Dog, who are all to be found in the mainstream music charts and represent big business with a lot of money involved. When people think about rap music, it is not unlikely that they will think of rappers like them. It is also not unlikely that the negative image of hip hop as a violent and misogynist genre stems from the video clips that one gets to see all the time. We do not want to put gangsta rap and all its possible negative and positive aspects on trial here, because that would require its' own thesis. What we are interested in, are our interviewees' views of this rap genre. Do they listen to it? What do they think of its negative image? Do they think it has a negative influence or is this exaggerated?
As in the previous chapters we will start with an overview of all the answers we received from our interviewees, hereafter we will link these together in our findings, to end with a short conclusion.

1. Overview

When Full Stop was asked his opinion about gangsta rap, he did not take an explicitly positive or negative position towards it, but rather approached it subtly, with a lot of sense for nuance. He thinks those kind of rappers are just telling

stories about the specific lives that they actually live. They offer the listener a perspective on the typical events that happen in their life, and that is not so different from what Full Stop does, except of course with the difference that Full Stop is not a gangster and thus talks about different things, because he lives a totally different life.

> *"I think those cats are doing what they / you see their life is gangsterism and my life is my life / I express my feelings by writing songs / and I think they're pretty much doing the same but in the other life in their gangsterism way life / (…) / so he's actually expressing what he feels but in his gangster life."*

They use rap music for the same purpose, expressing what they feel, giving an account of what happens in their lives.

> *"So what I feel I think he's just he's doing the same thing but on a different level."*

Conversely, he did think that gangsta rap could possibly have a bad and negative influence on young children, although he did not know of any definite stories that proved this point of view. He thinks that children believe too readily that what they see in music videos is a reflection of reality. It would not surprise him if they would try to imitate what their idols do in their music videos, because their idols get away with it, since they show off their luxurious life achieved through living a gangster life. Of course that picture is a distorted one, but when children realise that too late, it might have a very negative impact on their life.

> *"Because once you see 50 Cent on TV robbing a bank and you gonna go out there and wanna be 50 Cent and go rob a bank and you gonna die obviously / you're not 50 Cent y'know."*

We asked if it was not a bit too easy from those same rappers to claim that they are just rapping about their lives, while they apparently do not consider the consequences that their actions and lyrics can have on the lives of the children who listen to their songs. Full Stop thinks that you can not only blame the rappers, but that you should also take a look at the role the media plays in this whole situation. The media are very eager to write and make shows about the houses and the cars of the superstars: on television, on the radio, in newspapers and magazines, everywhere you can read about or look at the possessions of all kinds of superstars. Children, especially living in disadvantaged situations, will focus on that wealth and

will try to reach the same luxury, by following the lifestyle of the people who own that wealth, or at least the superstars' lifestyle as it is portrayed by the media.

> *"And because in some other cases even in the radio or in the radio news you hear that / o 50 Cent has bought a massive palace of house with 23 bathrooms 14 toilets and 88 bedrooms and 16 whatever dining rooms / and somebody is gonna wanna grow up to be like him / his lifestyle is go around the streets wearing a bullet proof having a .9 mm on your waist / and you gonna think that if I live the way he does I'm also gonna buy that house and that pool."*

He thinks that you can not only blame the gangsta rappers for their possible impact, but that the media plays an important role as well. If they do not want the children to be like 50 Cent, they should not give so much attention to this aspect of 50 Cent's life and songs. He thinks that gangsta rappers and rappers in general with a negative attitude, get too much exposure in the media. To him it seems that people who have a positive influence to spread in the community, do not get the attention and recognition that they deserve. He is convinced that hip hop groups who have projects in the townships can have a positive influence on children and can make a difference. Instead of smoking and hanging around, or worse, robbing shops, they have the possibility to be busy with the different aspects of hip hop.
He thinks gangsta rap is something that the South African nation and especially the children do not need, because it has the capacity to kill. It is all about promoting the tough street life, such as dealing in drugs and killing people. Youths are influenced by that image, because that kind of life gets displayed on television and you hear it on CD's, so youths might want to emulate that life, thinking it is something good and glamorous, because that is the way it is portrayed.
The issue of gangsta rap in our interview with X came up when we asked him to name some artists who had influenced him and he mentioned 50 Cent among others. We used the example of 50 Cent to ask X if he thought that gangsta rap can have a negative influence on the behaviour of young people. He agreed that gangsta rappers can be influential in a bad way. Still he does like certain gangsta rappers, because they are straightforward about what they think or feel.

> *"Like how they were brave to say this is who I am and this is what I think / I mean everybody is entitled to their own opinions you know."*

He follows the general idea about reality rap, namely that gangsta rappers also show us something about the environment they have to live in, a particular segment of society that is not known by all of the people.

> *"'Cause I mean at the end of the day they're actually showing us / yo this is what's happening here / like it's a way to shout / maybe you can shout out for help like that."*

Rap music to X is what an individual goes through every day, and is about personal experiences in life. When these experiences unfortunately happen to involve guns, murders and gangsters, then it is the rappers' right to write about that. It are not the gangsta rappers who make these things up after all, they just give other people an insight into their life. Most of the gangsta rappers have moved out of the conditions they used to live in. They are successful and rich, and that is the moment when they start talking about bling bling, women and start boasting about all the things they own now. At this stage, people may not like them anymore, but they continue doing what they have been doing the whole time, the only thing that has changed is their financial success.

The other members of the group he is part of, consider El Nino as being most influenced by American hip hop, to which he listens a lot, but according to him the main reason for that is that he can obtain American music far more easily than South African music. As previously mentioned, American music is also omnipresent in the South African media.

> *"Like mostly the music that I can get hold of is it's American people / everyday you switch your radio your TV American hip hop is gonna appear."*

El Nino does not think of himself as a gangsta rapper, he does not have anything to do with that kind of rap music. He thinks that gangsta rap is only about girls, parties, cars and so on. He can not write songs about any of these things, since he just does not have them.

> *"'Cause gangsta rap it's all you can go to the party / I met this chick / (…) / I got Benz / I'm rolling with jeeps and ice / I don't have that / I have me / I'm from the ghetto from a disadvantaged background."*

He also refers to the role that the media plays in this situation. They have chosen to give those kind of rappers more opportunities to expose themselves within the media, while the hip hop groups which have a positive attitude are ignored.

"But it's being portrayed by the media (…) they wanna portray like the wrong side of things you know instead of the good things."

He is convinced that gangsta rap also causes the negative image that people have about hip hop in general, because through the media they are mostly presented with gangsta rappers, and not with rappers who talk about conscientious issues. People see people like 2Pac and 50 Cent on television, and start accepting that every MC, everyone involved with hip hop is doing the same gangsta act.
Mayja told us how gangsta rap caused a lot of problems in the townships around the mid nineties. A lot of young people died because, after the example of the West and East Coast division in the United States America, Gugulethu was virtually divided into an east and west split. He is the only one of our interviewees who gives us such a detailed account of how gangsterism flourished in Gugulethu.

"Because like a lot of youth died because of this gangsta rap thing / and they were like gangsta's there was like now Gugs was like in east west side and the east is like the east side and if you found walking there at night maybe you just went there to take your girlfriend and then you meet these guys then you should know you just gonna die that night / so in a yeah it did bring some negativity / but no I think that's American / I mean the Americans they just believe in shooting and killing and talking about it that this guy shot me 16 times and I didn't die / I'm the real shit y'know I'm the top dog y'know / but on my perspective I don't think that's like what hip hop should be about."

In this quotation Mayja remains rather resigned about these events, he thinks this is just the way American rappers think and what they believe in. Although Mayja thinks that hip hop should not be about killing and shooting, one can only talk about what one sees in everyday life. If those rappers lead or have led a violent life, it is their right to rap about it as much as they want. However, those rappers should not make it a big issue if other people do not want to follow the same kind of life. There are other people, growing up in similar kinds of situations, trying to see the good in it.

"The only thing that makes me think that gangsta rap is not the way that rap should be is because people now people because of they've been shot they expect everyone to get shot now and go shooting around and I don't think that's actually what rap should be about / because if you go shooting around then you must be a cowboy then you're not an MC anymore."

He thinks that gangsta rap has led to some kind of negativity within his environment when he was about thirteen years old, but he does not think gangsta rap will in all cases lead to children adopting this negative lifestyle. It is typical for

youths to imitate their idols, but as time passes, they will discover their own character and find what distinguishes them from other people; this is just part of growing up.

Bad Luck listens to a lot of American hip hop for the same reason as El Nino does, accessibility. When we asked if he thought that gangsta rap had a bad influence on hip hop culture in general, he disagreed totally for two reasons. Firstly, rap music is about expressing yourself, and secondly, when gangsta rappers threaten to kill someone, that is creativity. It is not because they say such things that they are actually planning to do it, it is just a way of expressing a certain feeling; it is just music.

> *"Like in hip hop you express yourself / so those cats expressing themselves / if they say I will shoot you or whatever / that's just they show their creativity by that / obviously they not gonna shoot you / it's music it's just music."*

He stresses the responsibility of the listener in this situation. The possible negative influence depends on the way the listener interprets certain lyrics and from which angle they approach them. He refers to the case of the Bible, which is for him an ambiguous book: how people read it depends on their interpretation of the stories. Most hip hop CDs have stickers on them with warnings such as 'Parental Advisory - Explicit Lyrics'. Children are thus not supposed to listen to them, so it is also a responsibility of the parents as to whether their children have the opportunity to listen or not.

On the subject of American rap music, Shaun is interested more in the underground rap artists than he is in the commercial ones. He only listens to rappers like 50 Cent when he goes to a party or to relax. He is not interested in the content of the commercial rap songs, since they are only showing off about girls, cars and houses and boast about how many they have of all these. He is living in Gugulethu, so he does not have any of these things, which means he can not relate to the life they are living and it is not relevant to him.

> *"But to me 50 Cent ain't giving me messages / like some commercial hip hop there they all about chicks like wine houses big cars / that thing doesn't relate to me."*

He thinks that gangsta rap is really promoting the gangsta life, and is thus not only portraying it. That is the reason why people are so negative about gangsta rap, because it is portrayed as something acceptable, as if there is nothing fundamentally wrong with it. Young people might want to live that kind of life,

because it suggests it is all right, after all they play it the whole time on television and radio.

> *"I think gangsta rap is all promoting the street life where you sell drugs there you just kill people / (…) / that's why they get comments because the influence the youth / it's something nice it's because it's played on TV it's played on CD's / they want to live that life thinking that it's like something right."*

What these gangsta rappers write about, may be the life that they lead, but he thinks they should consider that their audience also consists of people who do not live that kind of life. They can live the life they want to lead, but he is living in totally different conditions and he thinks that young people around him can be influenced in a negative way through listening to gangsta rap, because they might be tempted to start leading that same life.

Crosby tells us he does not listen to a lot of gangsta rap, and when he does, it is only because they rap over pleasing and good beats. He is not interested in their lyrics that deal with guns, murder, money, drugs and more of such subjects. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this is definitely not what Crosby is promoting in his music. He is convinced that gangsta rap can have a serious influence on young people. Words and music are very powerful, so it is not unlikely that they want to follow the example of their idols.

> *"As I said word and sound is power / it's very powerful what you say / it can make people do that for real."*

If a person's favourite rapper is talking about his thug life the whole time and is actually proud of it, younger people might be tempted to follow his example. Crosby is of the opinion that a group of youths actually ended up in prison, through this kind of influence, because they wanted to live a similar kind of life.

> *"Tupac Shakur for instance there were a lot of youth in jail because of that influence /because they get that same attitude like thug life and all that / (…) / they start to want to experience the life the thug life style / carrying guns around and knives and having enemies so it really kills the community."*

That kind of thug gangster life might very well be the actual life the rappers are living, but still he thinks the people listening should pay less attention to it. He feels you can talk as much as you want about your life, but that will not change anything about the conditions you have to live your life in. These kind of rappers

should spend much more attention to the solution of the problem, instead of only describing the problem and not offering a future perspective. Of course, gangsta rappers are not the cause of every criminal offence that happens in the townships. He feels the government should invest more effort in its youths, making sure they receive resources to develop their talents and abilities, so that they can build towards a decent life, instead of being bored day after day, with no job or hobby occupy them. The government should also put more effort into decreasing poverty. Young people see the luxurious music videos on TV, but when they open the cupboard, they can not even find a piece of bread. Finding yourself in such a situation can be a small step towards criminality.

Eavesdrop always feels a little scandalised when she sees small boys walking around as if they are 50 Cent himself, because it is so far removed from reality. She recalls how she once bumped into an eight year old, carrying a toy gun that shot plastic balls, saying: "Mothafucka, I'll kill you." Although she thought it was funny at first, she realised this was rather sad, because this was actually what this child thought of as 'cool'. She is also afraid that parents would not even notice this kind of behaviour or realise the effect, because they do not know any better.

When we interviewed Mr. Fat we had not yet prepared any questions about gangsta rap, and it was not a full topic in our conversation, but it did come up. He thinks that a lot of people who portray themselves as gangsta's or tough people are just pretending. He thinks it is stupid when people with a middleclass background talk about gangs and how they are the 'real deal', while they most probably have done research about guns in books and on the internet. But even coming from a ghetto, the Cape Flats or any disadvantaged background, what do you gain from always talking about such negative issues? You are definitely not going to uplift the place where you come from, on the contrary, you will only promote the use of more violence.

> *"And like I says like you can talk about gangsta's / and you can talk about gun swinging / but what you do? / you put violence into your own community."*

He himself was marginally involved with gangs during his youth, which means he can relate to the things young people go through and he can identify with them, because he has been there.

2. Findings

In this part we assess the given answers and ideas and join them together in order to achieve some more general findings about this matter.

Most of our interviewees have a twofold opinion about gangsta rap. On the one hand they perceive it as a genre that has a certain value, because it describes a contemporary reality, but on the other hand, they do think it can have a negative influence on some young children who may listen to it.

Several of our interviewees think that gangsta rappers are not doing something much differently to what they do. Rap music is a means to express yourself, and that is what they both do, it is the specific feelings and what they want to express that differs. This is connected to another aspect of gangsta rap that makes it a genre with a certain validity attached to it, namely that these gangsta rappers also give the listener a view on their life. As they live as a gangster, it is their right to rap about it, as much as our interviewees have the right to talk about their non-gangster life. One can not deny that gangsta rappers narrate stories about a reality that is actually present in a lot of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, a sad reality consisting of a lot of criminal activities. They did not create the ghettos, nor the things that happen there. In fact, they are just the ones who tell the stories about it, and what their personal experiences are in that particular environment. Crosby points to the responsibility of the government. Gangsta rappers did not invent criminality, it is the conditions they live in, that has tempted them to engage in it. The government should, for example, put more effort in the fight against poverty, because that is one of the breeding grounds for gangster activity and criminality in general.

However, Crosby and most of our interviewees do not think this last remark should be a safeguard for these gangsta rappers to tell whatever they want to. They do think that gangsta rappers should be more considerate of the effects that their lyrics can have on young children, especially those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Their lives are portrayed in video clips as very glamorous. This, in fact, conveys the impression that they are rewarded for their criminal offences, since they do not only get away with them, but it also brings them huge houses, luxurious cars and a lot of ‘easy’ women. For children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with nothing but a gloomy perspective and nothing to lose, this might seem the best option to advance in life.

This can all be true, but most of our interviewees look further beyond this, and see other factors that add to the possible bad influence of these gangsta rappers. In

most cases they refer to the media as a major factor in the popularity of gangsta rap and its attractiveness to young people. The media spend much attention to gangsta rappers and are very eager to give them a platform. Instead of promoting people who write songs containing positive and conscientious lyrics, they promote gangsta rappers. This is probably due to the fact that they can make a lot of money from it, since rap music has become big business with a lot more to sell than only CD's; today it seems that every self-respecting rapper needs to have his/her own clothing or shoe range. This also causes the negative image that hip hop has for a lot of people, because these are the only kind of rappers that they are presented with.
Some of our interviewees indicate other factors that should prevent us from exaggerating the guilt of gangsta rap for all what goes wrong in this world. Mayja says it is normal for youths to go through a phase where they want to imitate their idol. Bad Luck also points to the responsibility of the listeners themselves. They should be careful with the interpretations they make. In Compton L.A. there might be a lot of killings, but if there would be a murder for every 'I'll kill you' in a rap song, it would be rather empty by now. Just to say, "you do not have to take everything literally, there is also the poetic licence", which is not only applicable to hip hop, but also to the Bible or to Nick Caves 'Murder Ballads'. In this respect Bad Luck also points to the responsibility of the parents who should keep a better control over what their children are listening to.

3. Conclusion

What strikes us most in our findings, is the fact that all of our interviewees approached this matter of gangsta rap quite subtly and thoughtfully. As we have already mentioned, rap music and especially gangsta rap, is often the subject of controversy. Nevertheless, our interviewees do not let themselves be talked into a black-and-white point of view, although we always asked the rather biased question: 'Do you not think that gangsta rap has a bad influence on young people?'. Although none of our interviewees relate in any way to the lifestyle described in gangsta rap songs, they do not perceive it as having an all around bad influence. They all live in violent and disadvantaged neighbourhoods and they all write stories about it, but focus on different elements. Most of them are convinced that gangsta rap can have a possible negative influence on young children, because gangsta rappers are mostly portrayed as living an extremely luxurious life, which suggests that crime gets rewarded in the end.

Our interviewees do see a bigger picture in this discussion about gangsta rap. They point to the poverty that surrounds them as a factor of stimulus for criminality, the influence that the media has by choosing this rap genre to be displayed the most, and finally the responsibility of the listener and the parents who should observe more closely their children's viewing and listening habits.

CHAPTER FIVE: CODE-SWITCHING AND CROSSING

In this chapter we will focus on to the way our interviewees talked to us during our conversations. Their speech will be the central issue of this chapter, since, as we will show, speech also reveals information about one's identity, or at least the identity one wants to give out to the outside world. We will start this chapter by giving a brief overview of the most important tendencies in the research concerning code-switching. Thereafter, we will apply the most relevant elements to our data. We will then proceed to examine the codes between which they are switching more in detail. Finally, with the assistance of the theory we formed, we will link everything

together in our findings, where we will demonstrate how crossing is put into practice.

1. Introduction

For several decades now, code-switching has been an interesting and fertile field of research in linguistics. Scholars constructed many different theories about code-switching, but not everybody agreed on them. It is difficult to find ones way amongst all the different terminologies and explanations, but eventually we recognise that two tendencies of thinking can be distinguished concerning the viewpoint on code-switching. The first one looks at the phenomenon of code-switching from a very narrow angle and restricts it to something only perfect bilinguals are able to do. The second one puts code-switching in its correct position, and proves that it is more than a mere usage of two languages in one conversation. We will discuss both of them, but we must point out that we are advocates of the latter one. The information we gathered during our fieldwork gives an explanation as to why we support the second theory. These empirical findings prove that the second viewpoint is much more realistic and accurate than the first one.

We must also emphasise that the information we provide about the 'general accepted opinion and definition' is information we found in articles and books about code-switching, so it is not *our* viewpoint and not everything that is written below on that point is correct. That is why we criticise this first opinion later on. Note that the survey is done by ourselves, and that the findings only serve as an illustration for the point given there.

Throughout this chapter, we will explain all that is relevant concerning code-switching for our research. Of course there is much more to know and to clarify about this topic, but since the amount of literature is so extensive, we need to pick out the most relevant information. We will start by describing both viewpoints, and we will try to improve the first one where necessary. Since it is important to know why speakers reach for code-switching, we will also briefly discuss the functions and the contexts in which it needs to be situated. This theoretical part will end with an explanation about the phenomenon of 'crossing', since this kind of code-switching will be very relevant in the interpretation of our data.

2. What is code-switching? Striving for a definition

2.1. Generally accepted opinion and definition

The most common definitions of code-switching place this linguistic phenomenon in an environment of full bilingualism, where the switches are made between two or more fixed languages or grammatical systems that are fully known by the users of code-switching:

> "A perfect bilingual may switch from language to language during a conversation. This phenomenon is called code-switching." (Lehiste, quoted in Blommaert and Meeuwis: 76)

Hence, the term 'code' in code-switching is the equivalent of 'language'. The important thing in this sort of description is that the speaker is able to speak the languages that are used in code-switching fluently. It is possible for the speaker to converse in those languages separately, as well as to use them both in one stretch of speech and in a whole conversation. So in this point of view, speaking or using a language coincides with knowing a language. From the moment somebody starts a sentence with 'Bonjour madame' and this language is not the mother tongue, that person can be categorised as being 'multilingual'. The general point of reference though, is monolingual speech that is produced by a monolingual speaker who never leaves their birth place and is surrounded by a monolingual majority. (Of course it is also known that multilingualism is not an exceptional case in the linguistic behaviour of individuals. About half of the world's population uses more than one language in daily life (Franceschini: 52)). Code-switching is a mere derivation of this kind of situation but is never seen as the starting point of multilingual behaviour.

If we put this definition in the context of multilingualism, this means that a person will speak only one language according to each different context. For instance one language (the local language) is reserved for the workplace or at school, while another one (most of the times the mother tongue) is solely used in a familial environment or within the ethnic group one belongs to. Mixing the languages in a conversation, as is rather expected for code-switching, will not occur. This kind of language behaviour is called 'threshold bilingualism' (Franceschini: 54), because one switches from one language to another when the threshold of the home is crossed.

The notion of language becomes strongly connected with the terms 'nation' and 'identity'. Starting with the first term: when looking at most of the names of

languages, they directly refer to the country where they are spoken. For example: French is spoken in France, Russian is spoken in Russia, Portuguese is spoken in Portugal and so on. Of course, this is not applicable for all countries. Lots of African countries took over the languages of their former colonial rulers, and they also have many other languages that do not refer to the name of the country. To state that most people see languages as strongly connected to the unity of a nation, we performed a small survey. We questioned 23 people (15 females and 8 males) randomly picked out from a shop in the busy shopping area of Oostende, Belgium. We asked them about the language(s) people speak in the following countries: Kenya, Senegal and Congo D.R. It was astounding how many people (11 females and 6 males) answered the question with 'Kenyan'/'Senegalese'/'Congolese', or even 'African'. Few people came up with answers like 'French' and 'English' (3 females and 1 male), but also misplaced them. Only one person (male) mentioned Swahili, another one (female) answered the question with 'the local languages of the tribes'. From this survey (which is of course too narrow to be fully representative, but is a good illustration), we can conclude that a lot of people are unaware of the diversity of languages and the language use in African countries. But more importantly to us is the fact that a lot of people see languages and countries/nations as strongly interconnected with each other. What also becomes apparent is that almost all respondent's named only one language per country, apart from 3 people who mentioned both 'African' and 'Kenyan'/'Senegalese'/'Congolese'. 'African' was spoken in all three of the countries according to the respondents, which can highlight a greater link: the one between a whole continent and a language. This last thing can maybe be explained by the fact that the African continent still is quite a mystery to a lot of people. (Only one respondent had ever been to Africa, and that was on a beach vacation in Djerba, Tunisia.) Africa seems to be a criss-cross of countries that many outsiders do not know where to locate, with the consequence that it only consists in their minds as 'the unit Africa'.

The link between nation and language can also be considered from another angle. When a nation has more than one language, that nation is then bilingual or multilingual. Inhabitants of that country are thus unilingual, bilingual or multilingual, dependent on the linguistic repertoire they have built up during their lifetime.

The second term, identity and the connection it has with language, is extensively discussed in the following part of our thesis. Even so, we will touch the subject briefly here in reference to code-switching. The question many scholars asked

themselves was: what do bilingual speakers gain by conversing in two languages (i.e. through code-switching)? Why do they not use just one language throughout the whole conversation? Since they are fully bilingual or multilingual, they are perfectly capable of holding a conversation in one language. Why do they make use of code-switching then? The answer is associated with the (social) identity of the speaker. Language is the index that refers to the identity that a person has at that moment. By making use of the several languages from a personal repertoire, the speaker could be a member of different identity categories. So, when one speaks in only one language, that person's membership does not reach much further than one identity category. By using code-switching however, the membership is dual or complex. The conclusion of the researchers was that languages could be combined with one another in a strategic way, as long as the speaker knows these languages. In other words: full bilingualism is a prerequisite for knowing how to understand the symbolic implication of the languages that are used. All this can be extended to the viewpoint of these researchers i.e. the negotiation of identities is the only or most important function of code-switching.
This observation regarding code-switching brings about a lot of implications and criticism, which we will attend to in the next part of our explanation.

2.2. Criticism, 'our' opinion and definition

It is first necessary to focus attention on the shortcomings of the first definition ('only perfect bilinguals are able to do'). We can start with the definition of the term code-switching. Within section 2.1, it is implied that only perfect bilinguals with full multilingual skills are able to make use of code-switching. This is an inaccurate way of thinking. Code-switch speakers are not necessarily speakers that are capable of producing unilingual speech in each separate language they code-switch in. In other words speaking a language does *not* automatically correspond with knowing a language. The question that needs to be asked here is: when does one actually *know* a language? For example, it is completely possible to mix some English words into a stretch of speech, while not capable of holding a full conversation in English. Would such a case class as knowing how to speak English? In theory, it does, because some English words were used. But if an English sentence was created that did not make sense, this would not be accepted as having knowledge of the English language. So, knowing and using are unstable

terms that are subject to the moment. This finding is of great importance for the analysis of our data described later in the thesis.

We must also distance from the fact that 'code' can only be filled in by the term 'language'. The code in code-switching can be so much more than that. It is the generic name for a whole set of linguistic varieties. It can be a dialect, a sociolect, an accent, a style of speech, and so on. This will be illustrated by the speech that was produced by our interviewees. They all use a variant of English (Black South African English), but they code-switch between that variant and hip hop slang. So, there is no switching between languages but there is switching between different styles of one language (i.e. English).

By no longer connecting code to language, this has a consequence for the connection between a language and the context. The example that was previously given about using one language at home and another one at work, clearly showed that each different language was reserved for each different context. Stress was put on the creation of contrast in daily life that arose through the application of different languages. In the use of code-switching, the creation of contrast by the use of different codes will play a much smaller role than the other view is giving the impression of. Language or code contrast can still be used for that purpose, for example to put emphasis on something, to mark a topic, … but it is no longer the main function of code-switching.

Since monolingual speech is the general point of reference, code-switched speech is a marked form of speech with special functions (identity negotiation, marking different contexts, …). We should no longer consider this as a fact. In some societies, code-switching is the rule rather than the exception. It is the normal way of speaking, and there, monolingual speech is the marked form. This latter form is regarded as a special or artificial form of speech. Code-switching needs not to be seen as the tail end of the linguistic continuum. It needs to be situated in the middle, together with other practices of language contact (for example pidgin and creole). Consistent monolingual practices then can be situated at that tail end as rather exceptional cases. The reason why code-switching must not be seen as peripheral behaviour or as an exceptional possibility, is because code-switching relates to a general characteristic of language; namely the variability in use and to an extralinguistic factor; that is the flexibility in behaviour. Those two 'forces' are the fundamental leaders of the language system and should no longer be seen as secondary characteristics (Franceschini: 52).

Code-switched speech itself by the way, *can* be seen as a language as such. Situations occur where speakers are unilingual, but they do use a mixed code. If for instance Lingala-French is the only thing a person can speak, then that code-switched form has the function of a language for that person. Of course, code-switching is not a historical language (in contradistinction to other languages in the textbook sense of the word). First of all it is not transmitted from one generation to another. Code-switched speech is also not stable in time, it is reproduced in every new sociocultural situation.

Code-switching is a 'language' that can be found all over the world in the behaviour of multilingual speakers. The functions of code-switching (which will be discussed below) are similar as well, even for the most diverse combinations of languages. To analyse all those code-switching varieties, clear concepts and terminologies are indispensable. There is a strong need for this clarity. Vague and obscure definitions and terms seem to be the rule rather than the exception. A simple example: one makes frequent usage of the term 'language', but never explicitly states what a language is. Everybody can define this concept for himself of course, and every individual can fill in for his own what he categorises under the terms language, dialect, sociolect and so on. This does not necessarily coincide with the definitions linguists developed, but there is need for a generally accepted and applicable definition. Categories need to be developed that can be used in every multilingual context.

After clarifying and improving the statements of the first opinion, we can move up to a more accurate and current definition of code-switching. Since Ben Rampton provides us with a well structured theoretical and practical framework in reference to code-switching in his book 'Crossing. Language and ethnicity among adolescents' (1998), we will cite the description he uses here:

> "Code-switching is an ingroup phenomenon restricted to those who share the same expectations and rules of interpretation for the use of two languages. Code-switching is thus usually seen as a device used to affirm participants' claims to membership and the solidarity of the group in contrast to outsiders." (Woolard cited in Rampton, 1998a: 270)

The research and analyses of the phenomenon of code-switching is mostly done with regard to youngsters (who are members of a minority group) and their peer group. This is also the case with our research. Biographical information about the participants is described in another part of the thesis, but we can already say that

all of our interviewees comply with the characteristics of typical code-switch users and speakers that Franceschini provides (Franceschini: 53):

- being of a young age
- a member of a minority group
- lower class
- strong 'ethnic' group identity
- multilingual social background

Of course there are also a lot of code-switch speakers that deviate from these characteristics. Those are called 'unexpected code-switchers' (Franceschini: 53). The last feature (having grown up in a multilingual environment) is an absolute prerequisite though.

Code-switching arises in groups who share a common identity. It does not develop throughout time in one single place but it develops simultaneously in different places amongst multilinguals who live in equal social circumstances, i.e. a multilingual context, a great importance of group consciousness and a permeation of cultural and linguistic norms.

In contrast with the acquirement of a language, code-switching can be easily picked up at a mature age. Adults can adopt this style of speech from young people, which is the reversed case of what you would expect (with language acquisition it is vice versa). As already pointed out, competence in the languages you code-switch in is not a prerequisite. Code-switching *can* be acquired immediately, without any base competence. Speakers who acquire their code-switching competence without speaking all varieties separately are a minority though.

Functions of code-switching

First it needs to be said that not every switch has to have a functional explanation. It can be a mere cause of linguistic preference and/or proficiency of the speaker. Let us take a bilingual person as an example. The occurring shift of languages the speaker makes is unmarked and unconscious. Therefore, the switch itself does not have a real meaning. It is only a matter of routine and this kind of code-switching happens when people grew up in a multilingual environment where the use of additional languages is an unmarked necessity. Code-switching is then one of the options people can choose from to adapt to situations where language contact occurs (other possibilities are the creation of pidgin, creole and interlanguages). Note that for this kind of code-switching it is a necessity to be fully proficient in the

used codes (in contradistinction to other kinds of code-switching). Auer (1990), cited in Rampton (1998a: 268), names this sort of code-switching 'participant-related code-alternation' (the term 'alternation' has the same meaning as 'switching').

Switching can take the function of a contextualisation cue. Here, the contrast that is created is used to give linguistic cues to the participants of a conversation via code-switching. You can change your code to emphasise an utterance, to mark a new topic, to make a switch concerning the interlocutor etc. Like this, you give out a warning to the recipients so they know they have to be attentive. It prevents the opportunity for confusion to arise. So, code-switching can be used to create clarity in a conversation to make sure social contacts can occur fluently. For this type of code-switching, Auer uses the term 'discourse-related code-alternation' in his functional division of code-switching.

We already mentioned the identity function of code-switching in the first part of this chapter where some researchers stated that defining or redefining identity is the sole or most important function of code-switching. It is a fact that this is *one* of the functions, but not the sole one. Not every code-switch situation needs to be seen as an identity negotiation. The means are wider than that.

When a speaker wants to define or redefine his identity, a language or a code is a good instrument to do so. Language as such serves to distinguish a speaker from other people by marking the group membership of that person. By utilising a specific style of speech and/or a specific vocabulary, people can mould a part of their own identity or put themselves in a specific role that goes together with that specific moment. Our South African interviewees make frequent use of this function in order to 'prove' their identity of being a real hip hopper. When one makes right use of the right jargon in his utterances, that person states himself as someone with knowledge about that subject. Whether that person is bluffing or not about his membership of that specific group is something we will discuss in 'crossing', the next part of this chapter.

It is important to know that a person can have more than one identity. Somebody can play different roles according to the situation he is in. Speakers have the option to move themselves through a whole set of repertoires. One repertoire corresponds with one code. The amount of repertoires a person has depends on the competence of the speaker. The choice of a repertoire and a code is determined by factors like the interlocutor, the goal of the conversation, the speaker's biography and tradition (Franceschini: 61).

For example somebody can be a strict and serious person at his workplace, but if he comes home he becomes the clown of the house. He can indicate and display these separate personalities or roles to his surrounding environment by using different types of speech. When he has to give out orders at work, he will use short sentences and an authoritative style but when he is at home he makes jokes and he uses diminutives to talk to his kids. Speakers have the ability, demonstrated by their interactional behaviour, to choose a section of their linguistic repertoire for a variable time span, to accomplish speaking activities. Throughout the course of an interaction the focus can change several times, and speakers can play different roles. The focus is thus variable, it can be functionally controlled and it can be used to give meaning in a specific social context. When one produces monolingual speech, that is called having a monofocus of attention. When one uses code-switching, that is a dual focus (Franceschini: 61-62).

The matter of identity does not only refer to the identity of one sole person. Language and the phenomenon of code-switching can also be used to express group identity. We need to mark here that the reference to the peer group is more important than the reference to a national, ethnic or linguistic defined identity. When you speak a certain sort of slang or jargon, that is some kind of proof that you belong to a specific group from which that slang or jargon is a feature. For example when somebody uses a lot economical terms, that person is most likely to have a job in that particular sector.

For which function our interviewees use code-switching, will be discussed in the practical part of this chapter. We will conclude the theoretical section with a short account on the phenomenon of 'crossing'.

Crossing

The term 'code-crossing', or simply 'crossing' was introduced by Rampton in the first edition of his book 'Crossing. Language and ethnicity among adolescents' (1995). To start our explanation about crossing, we refer to the definition Rampton provides:

> "The term 'language crossing' (or 'code-crossing') refers to the use of a language which isn't generally thought to 'belong' to the speaker. Language crossing involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or

> ethnic boundaries, and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants need to reckon with in the course of their encounter." (Rampton, 1998b: 291).

To elucidate the differences between crossing and code-switching, we will repeat the definition of code-switching which we used on page 71.

> "Code-switching is an ingroup phenomenon restricted to those who share the same expectations and rules of interpretation for the use of two languages. Code-switching is thus usually seen as a device used to affirm participants' claims to membership and the solidarity of the group in contrast to outsiders." (Woolard, cited in Rampton, 1998a: 270)

The first thing that attracts attention is the statement that the used language 'does not belong' to the speakers. If we put this in other words, it can be said that crossing is an outgroup phenomenon, in contrast to normal code-switching which is an ingroup phenomenon. A more profound distinction between both notions is necessary. Through crossing, people make use of another group's language or code, they figuratively cross a linguistic and a group border. They move across social and ethnic boundaries by the way they speak. This idea will be very useful for our research, where the interviewees make frequent use of this phenomenon. It will be properly linked to our outcomes further on.

The question is: why would people use a language that does not belong to them? The answer points in various directions. Identity will be the central issue here. Speakers make use of crossing to create or redefine an (new) identity . Since the speaker normally does not belong to the group he wishes to belong to, he uses language as an instrument to make the identity of that (social or ethnic) group his own for a certain period of time. The participants need to be convinced of the role that the speaker is in at that moment. In order to do so, the speaker uses a particular style of speech that normally does not belong to him, but is now necessary to emphasise his identity switch and to make it look real for the outside.

The codes that are used in ingroup code-switching are/can be used in normal daily life. Because of that, they have less chance to be marked; sometimes the switch is made unintentionally or unconsciously. Crossing does not happen that way; because of the context in which crossing occurs, the codes cannot be used in unexceptional everyday life. Crossing is a marked form and is done intentionally and fully aware. That is why it has much more chance to be flagged for instance by pauses in the utterance, hesitations, repetition, and metalingual commentary (Romaine, quoted in Rampton, 1998a: 272).

Another disparity with ingroup code-switching (and that goes together with the latter point) is that crossing does not arise in all kinds of situations. The violation that goes together with the social boundary crossing produces special moments and activities when the imperative rules of daily social order are loosened and when normal social relations could not be taken for granted (Rampton, 1998b: 271). Those kind of moments can be defined as being 'liminal', a concept worked out by Victor Turner in his book 'The ritual process' (1969). Some examples of these special moments and activities are: games, the context of performing art, delicts and transgressions, joking abuse, self-talk, response cries, and cross-sex interaction (Rampton, 1998b: 298) The norms of ordinary conduct are invalid at those moments, they are suspended. To clarify this, we will illustrate this point regarding the phenomenon of 'carnaval' in Belgium (these festivities are comparable with the American Mardi Gras). During a certain period of the year (end of February, beginning of March) people dress up in all kinds of things (for example men can become women and the other way around) and they can give comment on all sorts of things without getting punished for it. A whole crowd will form up a parade that walks through the city streets, together with floats that are especially made for the occasion by the 'carnaval' clubs. In that way, people can make fun of wrong decisions politicians made the previous year, they make allusions to things that are taboo normally, and so on. In normal daily life, these things would be seen as impolite, rude, or simply not done. But at the time of 'carnaval', people are allowed to have this kind of 'indecent behaviour' for just a short period of time. Of course, these sorts of events are highly ritualised and it must be said that crossing can also arise in a simple/potential breach of conduct that is not so long and abrupt (as the other examples demonstrate). Ritualisation is not an empirical characteristic that distinguishes crossing from code-switching. Ritualised language use is not confined to people who are using a language that is not considered to belong to them. Bilinguals also code-switch in these kind of activities (Rampton, 1998a: 271-272) and ritualisation can also occur in one language, take jokes as an example.

In the preceding part we have seen that ingroup code-switching does not require full proficiency in the codes that were used. A *certain* level of competence is required though. In crossing, this competence can be even more minimal. One should think then that the interactional character of ingroup code-switching is more diverse. This does not necessarily have to be so. Auer (cited in Rampton,

1998a: 272) states that three dimensions need to be taken into account in the interpretation of code-alternation:

> "The first dimension is that of the speaker's and the recipient's individual competences and preferences. The second dimension is that of conversational structure. The third is that of the values and social meanings attached to the languages of the repertoire. In any particular instance of code-alternation, all three dimensions may play a role, or just one or two of them."

The first two dimensions refer to the distinction between respectively participant-related and discourse-related code-alternation/switching. Those are terms we already used in the previous piece. In ingroup code-switching, there can be purely participant-related or discourse-related switching involved, without social connotations playing a role. Crossing on the other hand has all of Auer's dimensions because the third dimension, the social meaning, is also involved. So, we can conclude that the interactional character of outgroup crossing seems to be wider than that of ingroup code-switching.

Rampton, cited in Auer (1998: 288) provides us with a summary of circumstances when crossing occurs:

- recreational interactions
- adolescents
- who knows each other good/well
- whose institutional positions are more or less the same
- who recognise and exaggerate the differences of their communicative repertoires
- in a set of stylised and often playful interactions
- that up to a certain point constitute a form of antiracism

He came up with this list after his own research in Great Britain. The question is now to what extent our data will match these features. If we compare the overall situation where Rampton did his field work, it is justified to say that the conditions in Cape Town were similar to the ones in that part of England. It is thus well-considered to possibly extend some of Ramptons findings to ours.

3. Specification of the used codes

In this section we will present the two codes between which our native Xhosa-speaking interviewees switch. We chose to focus on this group of our interviewees,

because they were in the majority and thus they provided us with more usable data to analyse the English they use.

3.1. Black South African English

Introduction

In South Africa English has become a widespread communication language with a certain societal value attached to it, as in so many other places all over the world. Different African countries have witnessed the emergence of local varieties of English, which are widely used by non mother tongue English speakers. In South Africa there are numerous speakers of what is called Black South African English (from now on referred to as BSAE). During the past ten years more scholars have paid attention to this still rising phenomenon, particularly to its use and typical features, which we are going to elaborate further in this chapter.

Afrikaans is spoken by 5.8 million South Africans, English by 3.5 million South Africans only (de Klerk and Gough: 358). Lass (Lass: 104) uses statistics that indicate 3.45 million people in South Africa have English as mother tongue. "In terms of the old racial classifications, about 1.71 million of these are white, 0.58 million coloured, 0.97 Indian and 0.11 'African'." (Lass: 104) These figures show us that the overwhelming majority of the people in South Africa speaks one of the nine indigenous languages, 30.7 million to be exact (de Klerk and Gough: 358, Statistics South Africa 1996). These nine indigenous languages were declared official languages of the country, alongside English and Afrikaans, in 1996. Out of these eleven languages, "English is the only language that is significantly represented in all nine provinces, (…)." (de Klerk and Gough: 358) Therefore English is commonly used and considered a lingua franca and communication language between the different population groups (de Klerk and Gough: 358). Although only nine percent of South Africa's population are mother tongue speakers of English, there is a sheer increase in the knowledge of English as an additional language. Statistics from different surveys show us that 43 up to 62 percent of the South Africans have a knowledge of English, or speak some English, depending on the phrasing of the specific research question (de Klerk and Gough: 359). There are no accurate figures of the numbers of BSAE speakers. "However, rough calculations based on figures supplied by the Central Statistics Services (1994) suggest there are probably now

about seven million black second-language speakers of English in South Africa, a number already almost double that of mother-tongue speakers." (Wade: 8)
In South Africa, English is often considered as a neutral language, because it goes beyond ethnic contrasts. Furthermore, the ANC en PAC assigned English an important place in their anti-apartheid struggle, and as a result of that, people gave English a positive connotation. Although there are eleven official languages, when the current language situation is examined in practice, it turns out that English captures a much bigger role in public administration than the other languages. For people with different language backgrounds, English is also preferred as communication language (de Klerk and Gough: 359). "It is in this context that BSAE has thrived, and has begun to develop fairly stable and recognisable linguistic features." (de Klerk and Gough: 359)

Features of Black South African English

Before we start explaining the general features of BSAE and its use by our interviewees, we have to demarcate what variety of English we will consider to be BSAE. According to different studies, BSAE is "(…) the variety of English that is spoken primarily as a second language by black, i.e. ethnically African, South Africans." (Wade: 2), or "(…) the variety of English commonly used by mother-tongue speakers of South Africa's indigenous African languages." (de Klerk and Gough: 356) It is a 'new English' because it has developed itself in an area where English is not the majority's language, and where it is predominantly used for intra-regional communication (de Klerk and Gough: 356). Due to the lack of in-depth research on this topic, these definitions remain very general and superficial. Whose English BSAE exactly is, will have to be worked out more thoroughly in further research. In the beginning there was a tendency to approach BSAE mainly in a prescriptive way, rather than a descriptive way, which actually means it was considered as an inferior deviation from the standard. It was a variety in need of correction to become an acceptable language (Wade: 2). It was not considered as a variety in its own right, which has changed now in more recent research (de Klerk and Gough: 357).
De Klerk and Gough (de Klerk and Gough: 357) also track the roots and history of BSAE to the teaching of English to the black people of South Africa. From 1935 on black children were taught in their mother tongue during the first eight years of their education. By means of the Bantu Education Act, established in 1953,

instruction in the mother tongue was extended up to the highest possible level for black children, while the role of Afrikaans increased. At the same time the government gradually eliminated mother tongue English teachers out of the system in an attempt to deny black children access to English mother tongue speakers. This strategy did work effectively and resulted in a very limited contact between black children and native English speakers. Finally this resulted in the development of certain characteristic patterns of pronunciation and syntax, both traceable to the mother tongue, which are now seen as the norms of (spoken) BSAE (de Klerk and Gough: 357). The ultimate goal of this policy fitted the overall idea of apartheid completely. The diversity between people is stressed if everybody is educated in their own mother tongue. This was the idea behind the education and language policies, but looking at the spread of BSAE throughout the whole country amongst the ethnically African population of South Africa, it becomes clear this idea did not have the expected results. When in 1979 pupils were allowed to choose their own medium of instruction, after the first four years of school, the overwhelming majority chose English (de Klerk and Gough: 357). A major reason for this choice was the idea that English was a means for societal and socio-economic improvement, while the indigenous languages were not valued as such by its own speakers, since those languages did not facilitate an upward social mobility in society. Still, a lot of pupils have little exposure to mother tongue speakers of English and varieties of English other than BSAE. All of this has resulted in very mixed levels of competence in English and therefore it is difficult to make estimations of how many South African black people have a knowledge of English. Estimations on this vary between 32 percent and 61 percent (de Klerk and Gough: 358). It is hard to define what exactly is 'knowledge of English'. This is a continuum, with huge differences between the competence in English of the South African blacks.

For the description of the general and most common features of BSAE, we will use several studies that have outlined a number of features. Due to the fact that there is still a big need for more research in this field, there is not really a consensus on what exactly the main features of BSAE are. Therefore we have made a summary of all the features we could find and that often return. We have used examples from our own interviews to make the features more clear. We will restrict ourselves to features that occur rather frequently in the speech of our interviewees. Some authors recognise certain features, while others do not, and sometimes they do not occur frequently in our interviewees' speech. The latter might be due to the fact that

for example the features of BSAE are based on the English speech of native Zulu speakers, while our black interviewees are all native Xhosa speakers. Next to that, some authors distinguish a selected amount of broad features, while other authors will rather subdivide them in a more restricted series of concrete features.
We took examples from almost all of our interviews with our native Xhosa-speaking interviewees, to show that BSAE was frequently used by these interviewees and to show in this way that it is widely spread amongst this population group. Although they use BSAE, it is remarkable that some features occur more frequently than others, of course this is also due to the fact that there is not a final definition of BSAE yet. Certain features are more entrenched or fossiled than others (de Klerk and Gough: 364).
In most cases the authors try to find an explanation for these features, which can be found most of the time in the mother tongue of the BSAE speaker, but we will not elaborate on that here, because it is beyond our interest. We can say that these features are thought to relate to both native language transfer as well as universal features relating to principles of language learning and usage (de Klerk and Gough: 363). BSAE also shares grammatical features with a range of new Englishes generally and new Englishes in Africa in particular. Most of the fifteen features that Schmied considers as being characteristic of English in Africa (Schmied: 65), also occur as features of BSAE.

Wade (Wade: 3-5) distinguishes five general features, of which we will only use four. Between brackets we give the expected Standard English form.

1) Non-standard use of the progressive, which in fact means that "(…) the distinction between dynamic verbs (describing actions and processes) and stative verbs (describing states of affairs) is blurred in BSAE. Syntactically, stative verbs in Standard English stative do not usually occur in the progressive but in BSAE verbs such as 'have', 'like', and 'know' frequently do occur with –ing forms:" (Wade: 3)

   I don't think I'm having (I have) a negative impact towards the community. (Full Stop)

   The progressive in BSAE "(…) may be used in place of the simple present or 'will' future:" (Wade: 3)

   He's still an underground producer, but he is making (he makes) nice beats. (Mayja)

Every time I'm saying (I say) now I'm going to perform… (Mayja)

My dad he's like owning (he owns) this little tavern. (X)

I'm still asking (I ask) myself. (El Nino)

The progressive in BSAE "(…) tends to be used in past reference in place of the simple, perfect, and 'used to' habitual forms:" (Wade: 3)

I've been seeing a couple of youth changing. (Crosby)

I was cheering for people. (Dirty Tale)

We're emcees who were coming here to chill. (Shaun)

The knowledge I was getting was irrelevant to what I wanted. (X)

2) Non-standard verb complementation

Wade noticed different non-standard verbal complements in the data he collected, but all of them occurred rather infrequently (Wade: 4). We did find several examples of non-standard verbal complementation, as we will show under feature eight of de Klerk and Gough.

3) NP-AUX inversion in imbedded questions

I try to ask them what does it mean? (Crosby)

Why is it always you have to do things in English, why you not proud of your own language? (El Nino)

The tale is it dirty, why? (Dirty Tale)

4) Pronoun copying

This feature "(…) refers to the occurrence of a noun phrase followed immediately by a pronoun with the same referent." (Wade: 5)

I think guns and stuff, it's something that kills. (Shaun)

My dad he's like owning this little tavern. (X)

If those guys they got some money, surely they must pay me. (Mayja)

The following grammatical features were laid out by de Klerk and Gough (de Klerk and Gough: 362-363):

1) Non-count as count nouns

The thing is, he's got styles (style) man. (Bad Luck)

But most of the times (time), I'm this side. (Full Stop)

Just like expand your horizons (horizon). (Bad Luck)

Other people like my flows (flow). (Shaun)

2) Omission of articles

How many people are listening to (the) radio? *(Bad Luck)*

It's (a) different genre. *(Bad Luck)*

I think that's (a) totally different case. *(X)*

3) Extensive use of resumptive pronouns

Then I linked up with them and when they went to this gigs of theirs I always went along with them. *(Full Stop)*

So they motivate me in a way that I get motivated by them. *(Shaun)*

So during the time as it goes by…. *(Shaun)*

4) Gender conflation in pronouns

He got killed here in Gugs. (where referent is Amie Biehl) *(El Nino)*

He heard me on the radio. (where referent is granny) *(El Nino)*

She nodds his head. (where referent is his sister) *(Bad Luck)*

5) Noun phrases not always marked for number

There were many corner (corners) where people used to recite our rhymes. *(Mayja)*

Most of the girl (girls) I've dated before… *(Shaun)*

6) Extension of the progressive (cfr examples above)

7) No singular third person indicative present

You have to pay for the venue, that cost (costs) about more than a thousand bucks. *(Bad Luck)*

When he turns sixteen or something, start (starts) listening to rap music, he wear (wears) some baggy jeans. *(Shaun)*

Then I had the chance to learn more about the culture itself, that the culture consist (consists) of like four elements. *(El Nino)*

8) Idiosyncratic patterns of complementation

Most people in Cape Town know how to speak Afrikaans of which me I don't know how to speak Afrikaans. *(Bad Luck)*

But this female MC she's featuring on the album that I was talking to you. *(Mayja)*

9) Simplification of tense

A lot of times auxiliary verbs are left out in certain verbal constructions.

They believe in us, they (are) pushing us. *(Shaun)*

Let's say we (are) doing hip hop. *(Bad Luck)*

It's about considering the fact that you (are) doing music for the world. *(Crosby)*

They (are) new on the block. *(Shaun)*

10) Past tense not always marked

How did I grow (grew) up? *(Bad Luck)*

Because when I started writing, I started writing in Xhosa, so I find (found) out that I think it's the easy way to reach these people. *(Shaun)*

Because back in the days when I started hip hop, what I would hear it's (was) only 2Pac. *(Shaun)*

He used to be one of those people that went there and watch (watched) us performing. *(Bad Luck)*

11) New prepositional verb forms

It depends first of all with (on) their budget. *(Mayja)*

He's been to (into) music for like… *(Shaun)*

There was a time we were like interviewing with some other cat, he was interviewing us. *(Shaun)*

I had to buy everything from (out of) my pocket. *(Crosby)*

12) Use of too and very much as intensifiers

Some of the things inspire me very much. *(Full Stop)*

13) Generalisation of being as a participial

Then I started being nice on the mic. *(Mayja)*

I'm talking about maybe me being heartbroken. *(El Nino)*

Some girls grow up being they Britney Spears. *(Mayja)*

14) New pronoun forms

The people in Cape Town know how to speak Afrikaans of which me I don't know how to speak Afrikaans. *(Bad Luck)*

15) Question order retained in indirect questions

Once I told, why not we do a performance here? *(X)*

16) Use of subordinators

They tent to feel it too, but although they don't understand it. *(Shaun)*

If those guys they got some money, surely they must pay me, I can't perform for free but (because/for) these guys are getting a lot of cash from me. *(Mayja)*

17) Invariant nè in tag questions

There are some American songs nè that are commercial that I like. *(Full Stop)*

18) New quantifier forms

They paid me quite some good money. *(Crosby)*

These are the features from de Klerk and Gough that did occur rather frequently in the speech of our interviewees. There are five other features that de Klerk and

Gough distinguish, but that did not occur in our interviews, or at least not frequently enough. Most of the times it concerns pretty specific sentence constructions, such as the use of 'the most thing' for 'the thing I [verb] most' or 'X's first time' for 'the first time that X …' (de Klerk and Gough: 363).
Based on our data we can distinguish another grammatical feature that is not really named by these authors. It concerns the mistakes that are made regarding to plural and singular verb forms.

There's (are) chicks involved. *(Bad Luck)*

There was (were) gangstas here too. *(Shaun)*

In hip hop there is (are) rooms as well. *(Full Stop)*

At this point it is important to note that de Klerk and Gough think "it is important not to treat all of these grammatical features monolithically and as all equally representative of a uniform BSAE. There is in this respect a considerable variability with regard to the relative acceptability and utilisation of this features and structures." (de Klerk and Gough: 364)

3.2. Hip hop slang

Introduction

We will consider slang as "(…) the non-standard or non-dialectical use of words in a language of a particular social group, (…)." (Wikipedia[16]) Slang consists partly of neologisms, but most of the time it is standard words that are attributed a new and uncommon meaning. Through "(…) a process of creative and informal use and adaptation, (…)" (Wikipedia) a new language is created, or at least a new usage for certain words from a language. In the end, some kind of 'secret' language originates, that is only understood by members of that certain group who use the slang, and that excludes non-members from the conversation. Slang functions as a means to recognise members of the same group, and to be able to differentiate that particular group from the society at large (Wikipedia). Consequently, slang is often linked to certain subcultures, ranging from music genres to drug users. Yet, slang differs from jargons, because the latter are rather related to specific fields or professions (Wikipedia). For example, in conversations concerning their profession, computer specialists use amongst each other very specific words to refer to the actions they perform and the material that they use. This rather technical vocabulary consists of

[16] http://en/wikipedia.org/wiki/Slang

neologisms that are invented to guarantee clear and unambiguous communication in order to avoid misapprehensions. These specific words generally do not belong to the common vocabulary of a language and are mostly not known by people who are not part of this particular group. Nevertheless, a jargon is not used to deliberately exclude non-members of a group from the conversation, but it is more a consequence of the necessity to be able to deal with the more technical peculiarities of a given field (Wikipedia). Not only professionals of a certain field make use of jargons, other examples are criminal organisations or academics in general. Often slang is negatively perceived by the other members of the society for different reasons. Slang appears mostly in the language of societal groups with a low status, concretely meaning that they might have little power or responsibility. Next to that, slang is often taboo and is unlikely to be used by people of high status. Even more, slang is often negatively perceived by the other members of the society, because it often concerns words in the field of sexuality that are regarded upon as offensive and insulting, and used by rather young people (Papeleu: 17). This is a rather simplistic view that ignores the euphemistical tendency that is present in slang, because it provides a whole range of words to describe certain acts, organs or persons that make it possible to avoid explicit terms when this would be improper or inappropriate in a certain situation (Papeleu: 18). Slang is rather loaded with different meanings, which concretely means that different meanings are brought together in one word or expression (Papeleu: 18).
To end, slang can be considered a sociolect, because, as we have seen, it is determined by social determiners such as class, age, profession, social status and alike. For youths, slang is a way of giving that extra dimension to their language, that makes it deviating from the standard, through which they can differentiate themselves from the society at large.

Examples

We will go on by providing a list of most of the hip hop slang words that our interviewees used during the interviews. We have used The (online) Rap Dictionary to look up the meanings, but we will only display the meanings in which our interviewees have used these words. To show that our interviewees actually used this slang, we will give a few examples for every word, from as many interviewees as possible, to show that it was widely spread.

- to battle: to compete, usually freestyle rapping, sometimes breakdancing or graffiti.

  50 Cent is battling with whoever, Ja Rule I think. *(Full Stop)*

  It's break time, you get cats battling each other, tryna test their strengths. *(X)*

- beef: an argument or discrepancy with another individual or group of individuals.

  These gangstas have a lot of beef. *(Full Stop)*

  'Cause my mother and father had a beef. *(Crosby)*

  I don't have a beef with them. *(El Nino)*

- bling bling: jewellery such as chains, watches, bracelets, rings, earrings, etc.

  It's not more about bling bling on us. *(Mayja)*

  He raps about bling bling chains. *(X)*

- cat: a person.

  Coincidently I saw some other cats (referring to men). *(Full Stop)*

  So those cats expressing themselves. *(Bad Luck)*

  And then these cats from Khayelitsha… *(X)*

- cipher: an informal gathering of rappers where they can show and prove their skills.

  He's from around, we cipher together, we battle together. *(El Nino)*

  But you do get ciphers, but not in Gugs anymore. *(X)*

- crew: a group, band or clique.

  I was actually influenced by local people like local crews like U.N.I.C. and Driemanskap. *(Full Stop)*

  Why don't we like form up a crew? *(El Nino)*

  Yeah, Mayja is in my crew. *(X)*

- to dig: to like; or to understand.

  I mean I usually dig some of their lyrics and I'll be like wow. *(Mayja)*

  Yeah, I dig them, I respect them. *(X)*

  She's so nice, even guys dig her. *(Mayja)*

- to diss: short for disrespecting, to insult or thwart in a social manner.

  You can't go there and perform a track that's politics dissing on the politicians. *(Full Stop)*

  And they're writing tracks to each other and dissing one another. *(Full Stop)*

  Then he will start dissing his mother in the next track. *(Bad Luck)*

- to drop: to play music; or sing a song; or to tell somebody something.

  You can't just go up on a stage and perform for kids and drop some deep songs… *(Full Stop)*

- to flow: to rhyme continuously in the same rhyme scheme without stopping.

  Even the flow, the way he moves with words. *(X)*

  Guys got nice flows man, sounds nice. *(Crosby)*

- to front (frontin'): pretend to be that which you are not; or act tough.

  When you say you're a gangsta, but you're not, you're frontin'. *(Dirty Tale)*

- game: a game is some way to make money or advance oneself.

  I need to know people that's been in this game for a long time. *(Full Stop)*

- gangsta: a gangsta is a guy who hustles for money or deals drugs and is part of a gang; or refers to anything relating to gangs, gang members or their lifestyle; or anything relating to gangsta rap, its performers and its fans.

  You know, call my gangstas, make sure that everybody has got guns. *(Crosby)*

  So people can see it's like no man, this kid is not a gangsta. *(Dirty Tale)*

- ghetto: a ghetto is where Jews were forced to live during the holocaust. Later on it became the slang title for where many black people were (indirectly) forced to live.

  I don't have that, I have me, I'm from the ghetto. *(El Nino)*

  You can write about your girlfriend, your life in the ghetto. *(Bad Luck)*

  Sometimes especially in the ghetto it's hard to… *(X)*

- homie/homeboy: a friend or acquaintance.

  Then another homeboy of mine, but then he passed away. *(X)*

  When this other homie of mine passed away. *(X)*

- ice: diamonds or jewellery with diamonds in it.

  I got Benz, I'm rolling with jeeps and ice. *(El Nino)*

- kill: to be dope (=great) on the microphone.

  I should actually do the same thing, like perform on mics and actually like kill crowd. *(Full Stop)*

  When he's killing the crowd. *(El Nino)*

- to pump: to play music loudly.

  They will pump that gangsta rap music. *(Shaun)*

- roll: to hang with a given person or crowd; or to drive one's car in the neighbourhood with a certain style or finesse.

Those guys that I was rolling with. *(Mayja)*

I'm rolling with jeeps. *(El Nino)*

- skill: ability on the microphone.

  They very good in terms of the skill. *(Crosby)*

- to spit (spittin'): to rap.

  Actually stand on stage hold the microphone tight and spit it to people to hear. *(Full Stop)*

- tight: a state of mind, feeling really good at the moment; or straight, legitimate, all-good; or cool, dope, fresh (=new, okay).

  You also gonna feel that energy that yo this kid is tight hey. *(Full Stop)*

  This guy's tight, you gotta have his album. *(Mayja)*

  That's like a tight song for me. *(Shaun)*

  The only problem that I have with those South African hip hop is that everybody wants to show how tight he is. *(Crosby)*

- thug: someone who has gone through a lot of hardship in life and becomes a thug.

  Because they get that same attitude like thug life and all that. *(Crosby)*

- underground: non-mainstream hip hop, usually from unsigned artists.

  Not so commercial, he's underground. *(Full Stop)*

  The type of hip hop that I listen to is underground. *(Bad Luck)*

  But if you listen to the commercial stuff, there's the Snoop Doggs, then you get hungry for the underground. *(Mayja)*

- wack: rubbish; or not cool

  I started writing my own rhymes, but they were wack. *(Mayja)*

4. Findings: Crossing in practice

We already stated in the theoretical part concerning this phenomenon that through crossing people make use of another group's language or code. Crossing is speaking through the identity of somebody else. If we apply this information to the data that have been collected, it becomes clear our interviewees do the same thing. By code-switching into hip hop slang, they actually make use of words that rather 'belong' to African-American people, more specifically to African-Americans that are active

members of the American hip hop scene. Language is an instrument to make the identity of another (social or ethnic) group your own for a certain period of time.
Since most of our interviewees want to show and prove their surroundings and the rest of the outside world that they are 'real' rappers, they make use of this kind of speech. Interesting to know is that they adjust their identity according to for instance the situation, the interlocutors, the topic and so on. They do not have the identity of being a rapper twenty four hours a day. What they actually do is shift from one identity to another by making use of different sorts of speech. If we take a look at the interviews, these shifts are very clear most of the time. In the beginning of every interview, we asked the informants some biographical questions like how old they are, where they live for the moment, if they attend school or if they work. The given answers almost never consist of any slang whatsoever. But from the very first question about hip hop, the slang appears. Also the amount of slang was consistently higher after questions about American rap in general or gangsta rap specifically. The kind of speech they use in their answers, needs to convince us about the knowledge they have about the topic of gangsta rap. They are name-dropping a lot and they make extensive use of the hip hop slang to confirm their identity of belonging to the hip hop community of Cape Town (and South Africa in general). This belonging needs to be constructed by using someone else's code though. Note that not the whole repertoire of the code needs to be known to be able to cross. It is perfectly possible to pass for a real hip hopper in Cape Town when your vocabulary consists of only ten slang words. In that local setting a few words are sufficient to be identified as a rapper. In the Bronx however, you would make a poor showing.
The fact that our interviewees make use of American hip hop slang can be seen as somewhat contradictory, since they see American rap as too commercial and too violent. Also, in South Africa the American rap gets much more airplay and is more successful than the rap music made by people from the mother country. The interviewees state that they want this to change, that there is a need of appreciation and a need of a sense of pride for the South African rap music. Still, American hip hop culture is the source of identity construction for them, in terms of language but also in terms of material things like clothing.
The question is if they lack hip hop slang in their mother tongue. Maybe this kind of slang has not been developed yet throughout the years, because rap music is quite new in South Africa in comparison with America. Also, American rap music was the first kind they had access to, so that can be a reason why they borrow the

American code to claim membership of the hip hop community. One can also not disagree about the fact that the American hip hop culture still has the biggest influence world-wide.

So, identity construction consists of many things. Our people use crossing to build up an identity, but of course, as already stated above, languages or codes are not the only things that are used to construct an identity. The appearance of a person can also be a cue for others. Many different subcultures have their own specific styles that become stereotypical features in the description of those groups. People who like punk rock have a brightly coloured mohawk, hip hoppers are dressed in baggy jeans, white sneakers and oversized shirts, skinheads have a shaved head and wear black combat boots with white shoe-laces, and so on. These things are identity markers that give away information about the identity of a person before an actual interaction occurs. That identity can be confirmed during an interaction by the speech the person in question is using, but it can be denied as well (for example: somebody can be having a mohawk because that hairstyle currently is in, or just because that person likes it just like that). Also the opposite is possible. Somebody can be dressed in a normal pair of trousers, have brown leather shoes on and have long hair, but still that person can be a big fan of rap music. So the first impression you have about somebody on the level of identity is not necessarily the right one. DJ Eazy gives a nice illustration for the point we are making here. During the interview he is talking to us about Adam Haupt, a lecturer at the University of Cape Town who does a lot of research about rap music in Cape Town.

> *"But it's like Adam also he's not a performer and he's not a DJ he's not a graffiti artist / and people look at him funny 'cause he dresses he doesn't wear the big t-shirts and I mean he's always looking like he's about to go to some maths / (…) it's just like if he came into the room you like oh this is Adam / because he actually does have a lot of knowledge about the stuff."*

So, at first sight Adam would not be somebody you connect to the hip hop culture. But during an interaction, while talking, this would change because he has a lot of knowledge on the subject.

Another singular thing is that the coloured people we interviewed were not using as much hip hop slang as the black interviewees did. The explanation we can give is the fact that code-switching (and crossing in particular) does not have the function of identity building (anymore) for them. These particular people are already well established and known in the hip hop community, so they do not need to affirm their status of being a real hip hopper anymore towards others. Maybe this can also

be explained by the fact that coloured people were the first people in South Africa to do hip hop (this can have many reasons but is not relevant at this point). Black people followed afterwards and thus are still 'new' in the scene, so they still have to prove themselves towards their peer group.

SYNTHESIS

The overall purpose of this synthesis is to centralise all of our previous findings. After every chapter we have already summarised our preliminary findings. It is our aim now to assemble everything into one global outline. During the writing of the previous chapters, we have noticed that each of the different subjects we dealt with, were eventually closely linked. The first three themes covered, were the languages our informants use in their lyrics, the topics they treat and the way they position themselves towards gangsta rap, respectively. As we will show more thoroughly

further on in this chapter, these themes are intrinsically connected. When we add the part on code-switching and crossing, it seems that all of our findings, in one way or the other, have something to do with the issue of identity.

We started with analysing the different reasons our interviewees have for choosing a particular language to rap in. For a certain group of them, it was essential to rap in their mother tongue, mainly as a way to show their pride about who they are and where they come from. In a society dominated by English, they want to prove that Xhosa and Afrikaans are not inferior languages, but are deserving of an equal status. The language they rap in also depends upon the public they want to reach. This coincides with the topics they write about. If they want to reach their 'own' people with their positive message, they will rap in their mother tongue, because that is the language these people understand best. Since it is their ultimate aim to change things in their environment, it is vital these people understand the message that they want to spread. When they only want to rap about fun times they might turn to English as a way to reach a bigger audience, which is not confined to their 'own' people. In that respect, the content of the songs determines the play list. They feel that there is a time and place for making fun and a different one for discussing more serious matters. For instance, when young people go out they want to have fun and might not be willing to listen to some conscientious lyrics at that time, while they might do so when they are at home. That is a reason why they do not only write songs about big and urgent township issues, because you cannot always be aware. If they aim towards a mixed audience they need to differentiate the topics they write about, since those people living in other conditions and will not always be able to empathise with what is being said. They would constrain their audience if they only rapped about conscientious issues. The fact that some of our interviewees only have a limited knowledge of English creates a problem that they can only talk about a limited number of issues. The last thing we can link together is their position towards gangsta rap. Since they all try to a large extent to spread a positive and conscientious message, they cannot be categorised as gangsta rappers. They are very delicate upon this matter though. For them, gangsta rap is a valuable genre, because it tells something about the deprived neighbourhoods the American rappers have to live in. Since the living conditions of our interviewees are similar, they can understand what they are rapping about.

This is *what* they told us about their rap music, and the things mentioned above already indicate something about the identity they want to express to the outside world. In chapter five we attempted to reconstruct *how* they told us these things.

Code-switching seemed to be a valuable way to construct this identity by the way you speak. Most of our informants make use of the American hip hop slang to define their 'real' hip hop identity and membership. They are crossing a figurative boundary which is not a legitimate action since they don't actually 'belong' to this group of American hip hoppers. We have to note two things here. First of all, not all people have equal access to the resources necessary to build a particular identity, because these resources and capacities are unequally distributed. Thus, not all people will be able to perform a certain identity, due to the restricted capacities to do so (Blommaert, 2005: 207). Secondly, some capacities may be successful in certain environments, but may have the opposite effect in other circumstances (Blommaert, 2005: 206). A Gambian person speaking English in The Gambia, will probably be associated with societal success, while his variety of English would very likely be categorised as 'bad' English by a lot of British, and he or she would be associated with the lower ranks of society. This also applies to our interviewees' use of American hip hop slang, which is part of a specific variety of 'black' English, centralised around certain topics. They may drop just enough slang words to show alignment with this particular group, but if they were to actually be in the Bronx, it would become immediately clear that they come from a different place.

When one does not pay attention to all of these seemingly small and trivial switches in code, a great deal of important identity markers passes one by completely (Blommaert, 2005: 209). Because we researched on all of the different elements that are used to construct identity, we are able now to have a more complete and profound picture. This is in contradiction to people who see this from a greater distance, which blurs their view. The identity categories become more general and less precise the greater the distance is. To substantiate this, all African people may look the same to an average European but it is unlikely he or she would not be able to distinguish the Italian amongst a group of Swedish people. He or she would be able to categorise people coming from all parts of the relatively small continent of Europe, while he or she would probably fail on this task with one such as Africa. This example might be just in the sphere of appearance, it can also be applied to stereotypes in general. For people who do not know much about rap music, this music genre seems to be constrained to gangsta rap only, while it might be clear, after reading this thesis, that rap music consists of more than this particular subgenre.

CONCLUSION

For a particular segment of an entire generation of youngsters in the whole of Africa and thus also in Cape Town, rap music and hip hop culture in general, is a genre that not only provides musical entertainment. Rap music turned out to be an outlet for youngsters, who have found a creative means to make their voice heard, in spite of their confined economical and social status. They have managed to convert rap music in a way to express their complaints. Wrapped up in rap lyrics, they spread their message warning young people about the dangers characteristic of life in the

townships, which are similar to the average run-down district of a metropolis. They also try to incite people to undertake positive actions and to not loose hope. They often rap in their own languages and mainly about issues that they are directly involved in. By means of rap music they vent their problems, without losing track of the entertaining aspect as well. It would therefore be wrong to think that there is no rap music made just for fun and to party on. There is no reason to think that rap music can only be of any value, when it consists only of lyrics critical of the social structures, but they do form a big part of it. Rap music is a platform that gives them the opportunity to engage in social debate and to be able to get their message across to a larger audience.

Rap music is a genre that appeals to youths living in deprived living conditions all over the world, and that should not really surprise us. Although the specific contexts they live in may differ, they find themselves grouped together in not so enviable situations and only have minor means to express their feelings and ideas about their living conditions to the outside world. Another reason why rap music is so popular might, in that respect, have something to do with the facilities available to make rap music. In a worst case scenario, one only has one's voice, but with a pick up and a bunch of records one is already well on the way to performing before an audience. Of course not everybody can rap, but if one wants to and has the talent for it, then less material obstacles have to be by-passed than those to establish a rock band.

The relating culture becomes a means for youngsters to 'organise' themselves and to position themselves in society. They not only adopt the textual and musical elements of rap music, but also the visual ones, such as specific clothing. In that way youths make clearly visible to the outside world that they are part of the global hip hop nation. They engage in the world on a global scale, while still firmly rooted in their specific local context. They participate in the global development of hip hop and in its trans-national community, by means of rap music, but this participation is interspersed with local meanings and experiences. Rap music is, in that way, a means to create a common and shared identity.