From Tsotsi to Mswenko: South African Hip Hop's Significance for some Black South African Men

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Considered a signifier of the African diaspora, hip hop has been able to manifest itself across the globe. In South Africa, hip hop culture has boomed in recent years. This project seeks to understand the significance of South African hip hop to some Black men in South Africa. From interviews with hip hop artists and industry members, I explored hip hop's direct and indirect ability to provide livelihoods and entrepreneurship opportunities for some Black South African men. This project also explored the gendered experience of men and their understandings and experiences with socioeconomic inequality and injustices, racism and gender inequality in South African society. This research was conducted through a narrative approach and a critical engagement with participants on the topics at hand which provided an additional space for critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher. This research offered a greater understanding of the social and economic impact this industry has on some Black men and aided in opening up dialogues pertaining to Black masculinity in South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Hip hop is a worldwide phenomenon and a billion-dollar industry. Emerging in the United States in the 1970s to reflect the realities of African American youth, hip hop has since evolved into a global entity that encapsulates "the playful diasporic intimacy that has been a marked feature of transnational black Atlantic creativity" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 16). At the core, hip hop has become a space for Black[1] youth globally to explore and engage with the realities of a marginalized existence. In this way, hip hop is a social force whose malleability and transgressiveness has given it traction globally due to the shared experiences of Blackness. And South Africa has proven to be no different.

South African hip hop first emerged in the 1980s. During apartheid, early hip hop groups like Prophets of Da City and Skwatta Kamp embraced the music and dance of American hip hop and participated as allies in anti-apartheid political rallies (Watkins, 2012, p. 57). Post-apartheid, hip hop artists in South Africa continued to draw on local genres such as *kwaito* to develop unique sounds coupled with township vernacular to interrogate the realities of Black life post-apartheid. Also influenced by their American counterparts abroad, South African hip hop artists since the 1990's have produced unique counter-hegemonic discourses in their music to reflect their existing realities and many have harnessed the bourgeoning industry in the country through creative entrepreneurship.

[1] For the purposes of this project, I have chosen to capitalize 'B' when discussing Black South Africans. The reason for this stems from my agreement with academics such as Lori L. Tharps (2014) that Black refers to members of the African diaspora, while black refers to a colour. Further, I have made the personal and political decision to not capitalize the 'w' in white given that this colour reference to a group of people has not had the same violence attached to it that would necessitate a recognition of the term as it does for Black people.

With the surge in popularity of artists such as AKA, Okmalumkoolkat, Nasty C, Cassper Nyovest, Ricky Rik and others, it has become clear that South African hip hop as an industry has also grown. It is this recognition of the growing industry from which this research stems, though the reason for my focus on South African hip hop music is threefold.

Firstly, hip hop, acts as an artistic force for social change through a transgressing of traditional social norms and behaviour. From its early days in the Bronx, hip hop has proven itself as a space for Black communities to come together and to reflect on the injustices and inequalities that they faced daily as a result of American institutional disdain for Blackness. It was these feelings that ultimately allowed Black communities around the world to connect with the messages that hip hop carried. Hip hop "provides an ideal site for exploration of the shifting terrain and processes of black ethnicity" as well as honestly and sometimes brutally revealing "socially constructed, but powerful realities" to audiences that they can identify with (Ramsey, 2012, pp. 36-37).

Secondly, hip hop music worldwide is an industry that provides an avenue for employment and opportunity. Outside of being an artist, as this project seeks to explore, there are multiple avenues of revenue that people tied to hip hop can benefit from. Of special note for this project, are the ways in which the industry can cater to entrepreneurship opportunities that also work to inspire Black pride in the industry's audiences.

Thirdly, as an industry dominated by Black men, studying the hip hop industry can provide interesting insight into the ways in which Black masculinities are perceived and how Black men consider their position in a country where violence against women is disturbingly prevalent. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in being able to contribute to the literature on Black masculinities in South Africa that points to how men do or do not engage critically and reflectively in conversations surrounding gender equality (Ratele, 2014, pp. 30-36).

All of this to say, the task of studying hip hop and Black masculinities within it is a site of power relations that I as a researcher must be cognisant of. The literature review will explore how typical constructions of hip hop are often problematic and, I argue, belittle the socially constructed realities of marginality that Africans and African knowledge exist in due to Western/white hegemonies (Ramsey, 2012, 36). Furthermore, much of the research on performances of Black masculinity in hip hop music has constructed it as antithetical and incompatible with the goals of gender equality (White, 2011, p. 23). As such, it is important to consider these performances of masculinity as expressions of social issues to contribute to understandings of young Black men's experiences in South Africa in a way that seeks to open conversations on gender equality to include men (Ratele, 2014, p. 31). Important to consider as well is an avoidance of white dominant discourses that "demonize black youth culture in general and the contributions of young black men in particular" (hooks, 1994, p. 115). Because of these issues, it was important that during this study the way in which hip hop and Black masculinity in hip hop (and in general) was constructed and interrogated was done in a way that attempted to not perpetuate a demonization of men in discourses of gender equality. Rather, this project

sought to explore this idea of hip hop being a space for conscious engagement of social justice issues from the perspectives of Black men in a South African context.

From Tsotsi to Mswenko: South African Hip Hop's Significance for some Black South African Men seeks to explore hip hop and the industry's significance in South Africa for some Black South African men. *Tsotsi*, the South African term for a thug or troublemaker, represents the way in which hip hop and the Black men involved in it are typically understood and scripted. Whereas *Mswenko*, a term for swag and coolness, represents the reality of hip hop in being something special and unique for Black people worldwide, and a space in which creativity flourishes.

1.2 Research Questions

The overarching research question that has guided this project has been the following: what is the significance of South African hip hop for some Black South African men? A few sub-questions arise that will also be interrogated: how does hip hop music and culture directly and indirectly provide livelihoods and opportunities for some Black men? How does hip hop reflect the experiences some Black South African men with existing socioeconomic issues like gender and economic inequality and racism? How do hip hop artists see their position in the above issues and how do they use hip hop to respond to them? How have people in the industry been supported by hip hop and where would they be without hip hop?

1.3 Scope and the Role of Reflexivity

The reflexivity of the researcher will prove to be a crucial aspect of the research process. The reason for this is because my own positionality has proven to be both a limitation and a benefit to the research at hand. Despite my best intentions, it became an inescapable fact that I am a white woman from Canada studying Black South African men in the South African hip hop industry. I first moved to South Africa to complete this project in January 2017, and since arriving I have been made acutely aware of my whiteness and of being a woman. This has proven to be helpful in the research process, as Chaudhry (1997) notes how an ethnographic element will almost always arise within your research as a result of inevitably spending time with your participants. As such, I have kept a careful record of my experiences through a field journal. From a day spent at the Back to the City Music Festival, attending studio sessions with producers, being present at music video shoots and being invited to events at a variety of clubs, I have been lucky enough to immerse myself in numerous facets of hip hop culture in South Africa that even many hip hop heads in South Africa do not have the privilege of doing. It is therefore critical that I recognize the ways in which I have been privileged but also acknowledge some of the difficulties that I did experience.

That being said, I would like to point out from the start that there are aspects of my reflexivity that include other members of the industry who opted not to participate in a formal interview for their own reasons. And it is out of respect for their decision that although I may draw on some themes that arose out of casual conversations had with them that I think are important for this research, I will leave them as anonymous. It is also important to note that during this research process, South Africa, particularly Johannesburg, was plagued with numerous instances of violence against women that spread quickly through social media platforms such as Twitter and

Facebook. The murder of Karabo Mokoena, the Johannesburg Taxi Rapes, frequent disappearances of women and the #MenAreTrash campaign made violence against Black women a hot topic amongst everyone in the industry and in Johannesburg in general. Given these issues, it is also important to acknowledge my own privilege. I was always made aware that being a white woman did offer me some protections against this violence. I was made aware of this given my interactions in venues such as nightclubs where security personnel were very mindful of my comfort and safety, more so than other patrons.

As a result of the prominence of violence against women in the media, it is important to acknowledge the scope of the research at hand. While gender equality was discussed with each participant, I have to acknowledge that the scope of this research focused on Black men in the industry but this is not to demean the significance of women in the industry. My reasoning for this focus stemmed from the fact that the hip hop industry is dominated by Black men and including female artists and industry members would have resulted in going outside of the intended scope. It is not due to a lack of women, as my research and networking resulted in my connecting with a number of women who are doing fantastic work within the industry. However, I think it would be of interest to future research to consider female South African artists and industry members in terms of their own experiences which I have observed to differ greatly from that of men.

Another important factor when considering scope and this research is geography. Given that the majority of Black South African owned record labels, artists and industry members live in Johannesburg, I would suggest that Johannesburg is the hip hop hub of South Africa. Given my

own travel limitations and my presence in Johannesburg, this research does focus on the Johannesburg hip hop 'scene' and its industry members. From my time spent in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, and with people from these respective cities, there is a general agreement that Johannesburg is the hip hop hub.

1.4 Chapter Outline

Following this introduction, this research report is divided into an additional four chapters. Chapter Two encompasses the literature review that will inform the reader of previous studies and theories that have informed this research. This chapter also contains the theoretical framework that has informed the structure of the research.

Chapter Three is made up of the methodological approach to this research. Of specific interest is the list of industry members who participated, given that this research was conducted without the use of anonymity in its interviews. This chapter also delves more into my own reflexivity with the project at the outset.

Chapter Four consists of the findings based on a thematic analysis of the interviews and Chapter Five consists of the conclusions of the research as well as a final reflection on my own perspectives and ideas pertaining to the research and how they changed towards the completion of the project.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will serve to inform the reader of previous studies and theories that have informed this research. This review will also point to the ways in which the handling of some of these topics have on occasion proven to be problematic or antithetical to the goals of social equality and social justice. Prior to the literature review, it is important to note the theoretical paradigm that my work has been informed by. Due to the intersectional nature of this study, this study has been located in the paradigm of critical social theory in order to understand the importance of an industry like this to members of societies that it exists in.

2.1 Hip Hop: A Symbol of the African Diaspora

Hip hop as a cultural phenomenon is studied in a variety of disciplines. Most prominently, hip hop is studied as a by-product of the Black experience in North America. Of particular interest for this study is hip hop's strength as an intellectual and social movement for marginalized people that transgresses the norms and standards of the hegemonic status quo. Hip hop at its core is Black American music. As Imani Perry (2004) discusses, it is constituted as such for the following reasons:

> "Its primary language is African American Vernacular English; (2) it has a political location in society distinctly ascribed to black people, music, and cultural forms; (3) it is derived from black American oral culture; and (4) it is derived from black American musical traditions (p. 10)."

Perry's arguments echo those of other African-American Studies scholars such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. (2014) who points to the value of hip hop as a signifying force of Blackness and its importance to the study of Black culture in an increasingly globalized world (pp. xxxii-xxxiii).

Outside of its American context, hip hop is also a key signifier of the African diaspora. Ramsey (2012) points out, “music is a dynamic social text, a meaningful cultural practice, a cultural transaction, and a politically charged, gendered, signifying discourse,” (p. 18). Hip hop as music is something that can be carried through a variety of contexts wherein it can offer itself to those who connect to it. Because hip hop is studied as Black music, it lends itself to a raising of Black Consciousness, offering a tool for individuals to operate as a group “in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude” (Biko, 1978, pp. 48-49). This connection can be seen through Gilroy’s (1993) own assertion of Black music like hip hop being capable of being a symbol for racial authenticity (p. 34).

This to say, hip hop is often scripted as violent and misogynistic. Kubrin (2005) notes the ways in which the media has taken popular hip hop music and scripted the Black male body through it as “crazy”, “wild”, and “irrational” and argues that this was done in order to perpetuate the fear of Blackness in America (p. 363). Other scholars of hip hop counter this by arguing that hip hop’s perceived misogyny and violence is symptomatic of Black men’s existence in a patriarchal world dominated not by Black men, but by white men (hooks, 2004, p. 122). This is not to say that the issues of violence and misogyny are irrelevant or forgivable, but rather, as Perry (2004) asserts, that it provides an arena to explore Black masculinity as it confronts and retaliates against the power structures within which it exists (p. 119).

Hip hop holds value for social justice research. Black identities are socially constructed and maintained as marginal but powerful realities (Ramsey, 2012, p. 36). In the study of South

African hip hop, Haupt (2003) points to hip hop's usefulness in terms of engaging with these voices (p. 21). The reason for this, is that hip hop exists as a space in which artists and those involved in its industry can produce counter-hegemonic discourses reflective of the social inequalities that they experience (Gilroy, 1993, p. 16; Haupt, 2012, p. 14). Furthering this idea, Gilroy (1993) points out how these "subversive music makers and users represent a different kind of intellectual" (pp. 76-77), an intellectual that can engage critically with their realities of existing on the margins (Haupt, 2003, p. 26). Because of all this, I argue that music and the music industry should be recognized as providing "an ideal site for exploration of the shifting terrain and process of black ethnicity" worldwide (Ramsey, 2012, p. 37). This study has drawn on these established ideas of hip hop's transgressive cultural nature and its link to Black gendered experiences in racialized patriarchal societies.

2.2 Hip Hop in South Africa

Hip hop in an American context is widely studied, although the same cannot be said for the genre in a South African context. Worldwide, hip hop's importance is often recognized as an "imagined cultural community" due to the ways in which it can be embraced by its members as an identity, a worldview and a way of life (Bennett & Morgan, 2011, p. 177). In the South African context, Haupt (2003) presents as a leading scholar on the matter and his work points to the legacies of apartheid in shaping how South Africans interpret and create their own hip hop music and how some artists are destabilizing dominant discourses. He also recognizes the importance of studying hip hop for its value as a tool to examine social inequalities in South Africa. Haupt's studies of South African hip hop music have also warned against reducing the study of South African hip hop to an appropriation of American popular culture. He argues that

"hip hop continues to be useful for engaging critically and creatively with the realities of marginalised subjects and creates the necessary space for what Loots calls 'self-definition." (p. 26).

In addition to Haupt, Watkins (2012) has also provided insight into the history of and significance of South African hip hop music and culture. Watkins points out the significance of Black Consciousness to hip hop in South Africa due to its emergence in the 1980s and 1990s as a means to combat and critically engage with the intense alienation experienced by young people in South African townships (p. 65). Watkins, like Haupt, also points to the destabilization of dominant historical discourses and narratives in some of the music, something he articulates as being a sort of neo-apartheid consciousness (p. 65-66). Importantly, Watkins also argues that hip hop displays an evolving identity of post-apartheid South African youth, sensitive to the realities of existing inequalities, but with visions of an ideal world (p. 73).

Due to the limited amount of work on hip hop in South Africa, this project provided a space to engage critically with hip hop's value for social change, and the reason for this was threefold. Firstly, as demonstrated from the limited amount of work on South African hip hop, most scholarly work validating and/or encouraging the significance of hip hop focuses on African-American hip hop music. This is problematic, as Gilroy (1993) points out, in that it places African cultural productions in "crude opposition" to the United States, maintaining the power of knowledge in the hands of the West (p. 199).

Secondly, the study of South African hip hop has limited its scope and has produced a murky area in terms of its position in relation to other South African music genres. By limiting its scope, I mean that scholars like Haupt (2012) have on occasion amalgamated the experiences of coloured, Black and Afrikaans artists to be representative of South African hip hop. Additionally, South African hip hop's location in relation to *kwaito* is not generally agreed upon. Some scholars like Steingo (2005) see *kwaito* as South African hip hop in contrast with other types of hip hop as products of American cultural imperialism, and other scholars may identify the genres as different but still merge hip hop artists with *kwaito* artists into their work (Steingo, 2005, p. 340; Peterson, 2003, p. 207).

Thirdly, the methods of studying South African hip hop has left a gap in the understanding of the genre. There has been a shockingly limited body of work that uses interviews. Scholars like Khan (2010; 2007), Steingo (2005) and Swartz (2008) refer to media interviews and analyze lyrics of some prominent artists but do not directly interview the artists. Furthermore, in an analysis of lyrics, scholars like Khan (2010; 2007) and Haupt (2012) tend to focus on lyrics produced in English or Afrikaans, but there appears to be a gap in the lyrical analysis of work in languages outside of these. Finally, there has been very little work completed in the last five years that interrogate the work of artists and industry members who have released albums after 2010, and these are the individuals that my project seeks to interview directly given the speed at which the industry continues to grow.

2.3 Black Masculinity in Hip Hop

As previously mentioned, hip hop is often scrutinized as being violent and misogynistic. In the African-American context of masculinity in hip hop, White (2011) points to how hip hop is a site of social and cultural performance of Black males that can provide insight into gender relations and its value as a site to reflect on historically constructed notions of Black criminality and deviance (pp. 21-23). White also points out that as a subversive culture, hip hop becomes an arena where aggression and violence is ritualized by Black men through language (p. 69). While it is generally agreed among scholars that Black masculinity in hip hop has ties to materialism, misogyny and violence, there are some who seem to understand hip hop as reflective of a patriarchal system in which Black men do not dominate in. Both bell hooks (1994) and Imani Perry (2004) point out that hip hop is often penalized for these ties even though they are a central aspect of the patriarchal systems where Black men are marginalized subjects and a valuable arena to study Black masculinity in (hooks, 1994, p. 116; Perry, 2004, p. 118). As such, for the context of this study, I think it is important to avoid simplifying Black masculinity in hip hop as representative of tenets of violence and aggression against women, and rather be aware of what bell hooks (1994) is referring to as hip hop being "an expression of their own subjugation and humiliation by more powerful, less visible forces of patriarchal gangsterism" (p. 122). The value of examining this masculine music and the men within it gives insight into what Perry (2004) refers to as a "space of transgression where new identities and radicalized black subjectivities emerge, illuminating our place in history in ways that challenge and interrogate, that highlight the shifting nature of black experience" (p. 122).

In South Africa, Haupt (2012) has pointed out how Black masculinity in most hip hop is studied in terms of its embodiment of gangsterisms. Although Haupt has examined this in a different

way through the commodification of this idea of Black men as thugs/gangsters/*tsotsis*, his comments are important in moving forward on research linking Black masculinities to a space of South African hip hop in order to face the realities head on rather than depoliticising them, which is what he argues often happens (pp. 153-154). As such, his work provides insight into the ways in which the subversion of things such as language and historically dominant discourses in South Africa work hand in hand with the way that masculinity is represented by the hip hop music developed by artists in the country (p. 161).

2.4 Black Masculinity in South Africa

On the topic of masculinities in South Africa, both Morrell (2001) and Ratele (2014) have pointed to the ways post-apartheid South Africa has focused on gender inequality but not heeded changes in masculinities. Both point to a historical construction of masculinity in South Africa and its ties to shifts in labour and urbanity. Morrell (1998) indicates how urbanisation during apartheid created shifts in family units which altered men's development due to the ways in which youth began to move towards a tougher, more Black Consciousness influenced form of masculinity because many were unable to look to culturally traditional leadership in their journeys from boyhood to manhood (pp. 626-630). This was compounded by what Morrell argues as masculinity being a collective gender identity, affected by intersections of the realities of race and class rather than being an inherently natural attribute (p. 607). In conversations detailing post-apartheid experiences, Morrell (2001) also indicates how township youth were forced to remain in situations that emasculated and disempowered them, contributing to a maintenance of 'tough' and 'struggle' masculinities that Xaba (2001) also articulates. I'm inclined to believe from understanding the historical context that Morrell illustrates that these

'tough' ideas of township masculinities are linked with Ratele's (2014) discussions of the demonization of men which ignores the vulnerability that South African men and boys continue to have to violence and health issues (p. 36).

Although Black masculinity is a widely studied topic, I think it is important to echo Morrell's (1998) argument that the study of Black masculinity in Britain and the United States is not necessarily the most helpful in understanding Black masculinity in South Africa. Southern African indigenous social institutions continue to exert an influence in terms of the shaping of masculinities and it would be detrimental to ignore this (p. 612). Furthermore, Black masculinity is not always examined as a fragmented identity, and rather as a violent and oppressive identity. Again, Ratele (1998) also points out how it is important to consider Black masculinity in South Africa in relation to its apartheid history where Black manhood was developed in relation to whiteness, resulting in a loss of pride in being Black and Black manhood (pp. 61-63).

2.5 Opportunity and Livelihood in South Africa

In the context of this study, ideas surrounding opportunities and livelihoods stemming from South African hip hop intersects with aforementioned themes. This, combined with the fact that the hip hop industry in South Africa is not clearly defined in its scope makes it important to understand the context of the economic and education systems affecting Black South Africans. Firstly, studies have shown that young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment in South Africa and that availability of support for entrepreneurial ventures and career counselling is lacking (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2009, p. 230-231). The ramifications of this for Black men are echoed in Ratele's (2001) study where men indicated feelings of powerlessness in

the labour force despite the end of apartheid (p. 247-248). And secondly, it is important to note that studies of educational change since apartheid have noted that Black South African men's transition rates at primary and secondary levels of education are despairingly low which in turn affects access to future life opportunities and affects the possibility of upward class mobility **(**Hill et al, 2012, p. 247).

Following this, Haupt (2012) has provided some insight into South African hip hop as an industry. One of his points is that the Black elite minority that does exist in South Africa is not significant enough to be proof of successful social transformation and restorative justice post-apartheid (pp. 106-107). Prior to the beginning of the fieldwork, it was clear that creative entrepreneurship in the hip hop industry was something difficult to define. However, it was clear that an awareness of the socioeconomic inequalities for some Black South African men ultimately made this industry an attractive one for those interviewed.

2.6 Critical Diversity Studies and Hip Hop

The reason for conducting this research within the realm of Critical Diversity Studies is that the project will allow significant insight into an industry that is popular and dominated by men in South Africa, and yet, not completely recognized for its importance and thus, this research constitutes Critical Diversity Studies research for a number of reasons.

As previously mentioned, some of the research on South African hip hop, and hip hop in general, has proven problematic. The lack of legitimization of the knowledge that hip hop offers of a society and specifically of how Black bodies experience marginalization in a society is reflective

of power dynamics. I argue that my chosen research methodology, which will be further discussed in the following section, will reveal these power dynamics in terms of how cultural imperialism and marginalization (Steyn, 2015, p. 379) have continued to subordinate and invalidate the Black experience depicted through hip hop music. This ties directly into my research questions which seek to understand how hip hop reflects the experiences of these power dynamics. My chosen research methodology will allow for me to examine how systems of oppression have shaped the lives of the individuals I interview and how they have interacted, interrogated and circumvented some of these issues. These exploration based research questions allow for an understanding of the systems of oppression each participant may have been most affected by, may be most aware of and even allow me to see what some of them may be unaware of because of the normalization of the oppression in their everyday life (Steyn, 2015, pp. 383-384).

This research project will also be able to examine oppressive systems that the participants currently live in as a current social problem, rather than purely historical legacy (Steyn, 2015, pp. 384-385). While I will ask questions regarding their pasts and understandings of South African hip hop history, this is more to aid in the context of their development as artists and as people which is important. My research questions have been created in a way that encourages the participants to share their experiences. Most of my participants were old enough to remember the final years of apartheid. Because of this, I was able to ask them questions about what they see as South Africa's current issues. We were able to expand this, especially with the men who had children, by reflecting on their concerns for the future of South Africa for their children. This allowed for further exploration and engagement with each participant's reflections of the past,

present and their concerns for the future. The awareness of the participants to many issues prevalent in society allowed for conversations about how they do, or do not, engage with transformation using their platforms. This is then representative of what Steyn (2015) refers to as an engagement of these issues of transformation to allow for a deepening of social justice, which I as a researcher become involved in through this project (pp. 387-388).

As a result of the project's goals of being aware of the ways in which knowledge is constructed, the project does constitute Critical Diversity Studies research. The goals, as laid out by the research questions, and my chosen research methodology, allow for an analysis of the context of the South Africans interviewed as well as their reflections, hopes and concerns. All in all, I feel that the project and the research questions guiding it constitutes important Critical Diversity Studies research.

The following chapter will explore the methodological approaches I have mentioned that were taken to conduct this research given the understanding of the aforementioned literature explored.

CHAPTER 3: THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter will allow for an explanation of the methodological approach undertaken for this research. This study is qualitative and has been constructed within the critical tradition of social research in order to explore the personal experiences of the individuals involved in the hip hop industry. The qualitative methods used were based on life history and autobiographical act interviews in order to elicit memories and opinions from the life stories of the participants.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Prior to delving into the value of these methods for this study, I will first clarify the scope of the elements that have made up the initial approach to the research as part of the theoretical framework: Hip hop in a South African context, Black masculinity, opportunity and livelihoods.

3.1.1 Hip Hop in a South African Context

For the purposes of this study, hip hop music and culture have been recognized as a "meaningful cultural practice, a cultural transaction, and a politically charged, gendered, signifying discourse" (Ramsey, 2012, p. 18). I am inclined to support Gilroy's (1993) idea that Black cultural expressions like hip hop should be legitimized in academic circles to recognize the significance of Black cultural expression within the African diaspora and the racialized societies that people exist in (pp. 5-6). Though Gilroy (1993) is speaking from his experiences with Eurocentric modernity, I argue that we can include South African hip hop as being representative of what he articulates as a counterculture of modernity (p. 16). It is important to note that throughout my study, I sought to recognize South African hip hop as an authentic expression of Black South African identity rather than as a by-product of globalization. This was done in order to prevent a

subordination of the music to African American hip hop and Western knowledge in general (Charry, 2012, p. 285).

Following this, South African hip hop within this study is being defined as separate from, albeit influenced by *kwaito.* While some artists present parallels with *kwaito* and much of popular South African hip hop music is influenced by *kwaito,* it is important that this influence is recognized but not amalgamated (Steingo, 2005, pp. 340-342). This is not to reduce the significance of *kwaito* in its importance for self-definition, as both hip hop and *kwaito* are both mediums for marginalized subjects to define their identities and experiences as Black South Africans (Haupt, 2003, p. 26).

3.1.2 Black Masculinity

bell hooks (1994) points out that "a central motivation for highlighting gangsta rap continues to be the sensationalist drama of demonizing black youth culture in general and the contributions of young black men in particular" (p.115). For this study it is recognized that the demonization of Black males perpetuates ideas antithetical to conversations of gender equality and ignores unequal power relations in the construction of societies that they exist in (hooks, 1994, p. 123; Morrell, 1998, p. 607). Black masculinities in this context will be examined in terms of how some Black South African men are articulating their post-apartheid realities within racialized power structures. The realm of the hip hop industry also provides an interesting avenue to understand how these masculinities are understood and practiced in relation to some of these social issues (Kimmel, 2004, p. 503; Morrell, 1998, p. 630).

3.1.3 Opportunities and Livelihoods

For the purposes of this study, opportunity and livelihood have been tied specifically to the men who inhabit positions of creative entrepreneurship affiliated with the hip hop industry and 'scene' in South Africa. In South Africa, studies have shown that "young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment" and it was seen quite early on that for this project, it was largely men under 35 who participate in the hip hop industry, proving the importance of exploring their experiences (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2009, p. 227). In addition to this, the significance of the opportunities and livelihoods that hip hop provides in South Africa will be tied to the ways in which it has been found that Black South Africans are affected by reduced life chances due to a lack of access to quality primary and secondary education and often, a lack of opportunity to obtain tertiary education (Hill, Baxen, Craig, Namakula, & Sayed 2012, p. 247). In this way, it will be important to consider creative entrepreneurs in the creative industries and explore their success to the hip hop industry in South Africa.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Considerations

Data collection for the purposes of this study was conducted through semi-structured autobiographical/life story narrative interviews based on my research questions and sub-questions. I wanted to be able to "elicit memories, attitudes and reflection on experiences" that are reflective of each individual's experiences with hip hop and what it means to them in terms of significance to their life (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 34-35). Furthermore, a semi-structured interview based on a life history narrative allowed the individual to provide me with information that they see as relevant to building a sense of the larger social contexts in which they exist (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 41). From the interviews I was able to draw

connections between the significance of hip hop and social issues to the interviewees, drawing on Nuttall & Michael's (2000a) call for allowing theorizing about the socioeconomic inequalities and injustices to come from the interviewees direct experience with them (pp. 22-23).

The interview schedule was divided into three sections. The first section of my interview schedule sought to understand how the individual grew up and became interested in hip hop. The vast majority of my participants were in their early teens or young adulthood towards the end of apartheid, and in asking them about where and how they grew up, I was able to gather information not only about them but also about how male role models in their lives experienced the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa. I also engaged my participants with regards to their children, if they had any, and how they see the society that their children are now growing up in. Following this, the second set of questions related to their involvement in the hip hop industry. Whether their capacity is that of an artist, an industry member or both, I was trying to understand their motives for entering and remaining in the industry. This particular set of questions was also aimed at understanding the larger social and economic context these men are part of, and how the hip hop industry was able to provide them with what they may have needed (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 41). The final set of question related to their roles as artists and/or industry members and how they see themselves in relation to being able to promote a message. This is also the point where I asked them about how they see the future of South Africa, evoking not only their dreams but also how they see the reality of certain issues in the country and whether or not they see themselves as having a role in changing these things (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 48).

It is important to note though, that although there are three core sections of questions, I attempted to allow the participant to carry the conversation. This informal and semi-structured nature of the interviews allows for the participants to share anecdotes and ideas that they found to be important and allow them to share things that they deemed relevant. After all, their memories are reflections of their unique and varied experiences with social dynamics and historical change across a lifetime of being involved in hip hop and the industry in South Africa that I cannot identify with personally (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 35). While I have pointed to what this particular method is and how I am using it, it is also important to understand how I believe this method works specifically in the South African context to determine conclusions that will be discussed later.

As Nuttall and Michael (2000) point out, "the autobiographical act in South Africa, more than a literary convention, has become a cultural activity" (p. 298). Individual identities in post-apartheid South Africa have emerged as new and legitimized concepts that translate experiences into stories to reflect their unique experiences with the past, the present and the future (p. 298). As such, interviews that elicit life stories reveal the experiences of bodies navigating a rapidly transitioning cultural space (p. 317). The autobiographical act and life histories are a valuable and important method of research to understand the experiences of Black men and women in post-apartheid South Africa.

While it is clear that this method is beneficial given its context, there are two other primary reasons for the selection of the autobiographical/life history research methodology in terms of coming to my conclusions which will be discussed later. The first is that the lives of hip hop

artists and industry members are important because of how they shape and maintain a uniquely transgressive Black cultural production whose male dominated culture is best understood and discussed by those directly involved to create a space for a reclaiming of the Black cultural production.

Music is not only a social text, but also part of larger cultural discourses (Ramsey, 2012, p. 18). Hip hop music in particular carries with it not only a language, but a culture of liberation that speaks to issues of marginalization experienced by Black bodies worldwide (White, 2011, p. 56). I am inclined to agree with Paul Gilroy's (1993) argument that "it is imperative, though very hard, to… get black cultural expressions, analyses, and histories taken seriously in academic circles rather than assigned via the idea of race relations to sociology and thence abandoned to the elephant's graveyard to which intractable policy issues go to await their expiry…" (pp. 5-6). The reason for this is how hip hop, as a Black cultural production, is able to reflect and interrogate Black struggles no matter the geographic location (p. 36). I would also agree with Gilroy's assertion that, whether in a South African context or elsewhere, interviewing artists is crucial because of the self-understanding that artists articulate in their music. This allows for not only a respect for the music and its strength as a social movement and culture, but it also allows for an acknowledgement of how music is shaped through the lived experiences of the individual bodies it comes from (p. 74-75).

Secondly, the autobiographical and life story approach allows for a shift in the way that hip hop music is generally thought about. In seeking to understand the lives of those involved in the music and in the industry, one is able to understand firsthand the significance of hip hop music as

a diasporic experience that is so often subordinated in its legitimacy by the West (Gilroy, 1993, pp. 78-81). This, as Moya (2011) points out, is indicative of the ways in which the West does not see Africa and Africans as legitimate producers of knowledge. It is also indicative of how the West sees parts of the world, and cultural productions such as hip hop, as less interesting and less important than their own (pp. 82-84). As Moya would suggest, paying special attention to the struggles of the marginalized is important to better understand the hierarchies at play that continue to subordinate and marginalize them (p. 85).

Similarly, such a method when used to examine masculinity in particular, also allows for a shift in the way that men in the industry are typically described as. By interviewing artists and men involved in the industry in South Africa, I hope that I will be able to reveal life experiences that point to what hooks (1993) is talking about when she points out that hip hop music reflects the anger and humiliation of Black men at the hands of dominant white supremacist capitalist societies that Black men exist in as marginalized and subjugated bodies. It humanizes their identities, whether they see themselves as rappers, as fathers, as friends, or as anything that they choose to be (p. 122).

Another important reason for the selection of the autobiographical/life history research methodology is the existing gap in the research on methods such as this being used. As previously mentioned, the study of hip hop and of gender in hip hop is almost always linked to violence and misogyny. Continuing in this vein would allow for a reiteration of these ideas (hooks, 1994, p. 116). In addition to this, methodologically, there are few scholars who have used the method I have selected to shape their findings on South African hip hop music and on

Blackness and Black masculinity within hip hop. Scholars such as Khan (2007; 2010) have often relied on lyrical analysis and media interviews with artists to shape their findings about the lives and experiences of South African hip hop artists. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, by limiting the ways in which the music and artists are studied, I argue that this produced work that is rather limited in scope. Not only is the scope limited in terms of how research is conducted, but also in who is studied. For example, Haupt's (2012) work was limited in terms of language. By only focusing on artists who produced music in English or Afrikaans, his work left out the majority of the country's official languages. Other work, such as Khan's (2007; 2010) numerous English lyrical analyses have also proven to be similarly limited.

As a result of these issues, I am confident in my chosen research methodology. This method allows for a reliance of the researcher on the validation and legitimizing of the life experiences and reflections of the participants involved. In doing this, it prevents the trope of doing, as Kilomba (2013) discusses, a marginalization of Black discourses through a violent hierarchy that marks Black bodies as incapable of producing knowledge (p. 26). It is largely in an effort to prevent this trope that I feel a life history and autobiographical method is absolutely necessary.

3.3 Participants

As my research questions imply, this study required the participation of Black South African men involved in the hip hop industry. It was my goal to have a combination of artists and other people in the industry to demonstrate the scope of the industry. I was lucky enough to be put in touch with artists such as Reason, ProVerb and Slikour, as well as other members of the industry: Mr. Instro, Rashid Kay, Brian Nkosi and Austin Malema.

It is important to note that efforts were made to sit down with other individuals including Blaklez, Cassper Nyovest, KO and Okmalumkoolkat. Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules or tours (as all four released major albums early in 2017), I was unable to connect with them. That being said, I was able to meet and speak with some of them in more casual settings which I have included as a part of my reflexivity.

i) *Rashid Kay:* Rashid Kay was the first member of the hip hop industry that I met in Johannesburg. We met on the set of the hip hop television show that he produces, *ShizLive*, in January 2017. Rashid, 29, works as a radio DJ, television producer and event organizer in Johannesburg. He grew up in Thokoza in the East Rand, an area that he still often visits to search for upcoming talent. He was also kind enough to bring me to the area to show me the car washes and basketball courts where artists in the 'hood cypher amongst one another. Rashid's impact in the South African hip hop industry is felt by his presence as a DJ on MetroFM, a rapper, his production of shows for SABC1 and his organization of major hip hop events such as the South African Hip Hop Awards and sub-Saharan Africa's biggest hip hop music festival, the Back to the City Festival held every year in Newtown, Johannesburg on Freedom Day. It was as a result of my connection to Rashid that I was able to reach out to a number of other people in the industry to request interviews and for that I am indebted to him.

ii) *Austin Malema:* Austin Malema and I first connected via Twitter and ended up meeting in Cape Town at the International Jazz Festival in March 2017. Prior to this,

I had become aware of Austin due to his #CreditThePhotographer campaign on Twitter and Instagram which sought to properly credit event and celebrity photographers after some of his photographs went viral without crediting him. Since then, Austin has gained much esteem as an event and celebrity photographer, having photographed the likes of SA hip hop royalty; Cassper Nyovest, Okmalumkoolkat, Ricky Rik and Anatii, among others. Furthermore, Austin is also known for photography with brands, such as Fila, heavily associated with hip hop worldwide. Austin, 26, grew up in Limpopo and Randburg, primarily with his mother and great-grandmother. He attended film school and has his Honours in Motion Picture. Currently, Austin works full time as a photographer, and also cares for his son. While other people approached were more directly involved in the hip hop industry, Austin was selected because of his proximity to the industry and for the way in which his specialty of hip hop event photography has caused his surge in popularity. He is known for photographing local acts as well as international acts such as Future and A$AP Ferg in South Africa. Austin's position as a creative entrepreneur proved helpful to examine general opportunities in South Africa and the feasibility of creative entrepreneurship. He also became one of many photographers I met throughout this journey who are also doing extremely well as entrepreneurs and small business owners.

iii) *Slikour:* Siya "Slikour" Metane and I first met at Taboo Nightclub in Sandton through Austin Malema. Slikour, 36, runs an online music platform, *SlikourOnLife* that promotes African hip hop music. Slikour grew up in Katlehong in the East Rand, attended some computer engineering courses but then fell into hip hop completely.

Slikour made a name for himself in the South African hip hop world as a member of Skwatta Kamp which was founded in 1996. Since then he has worked closely to the industry as the owner of *SlikourOnLife.*

iv) *ProVerb:* Tebogo "ProVerb" Thekisho and I were connected via Rashid Kay in May 2017. ProVerb is currently an entertainer, a host of South African Idols, Miss South Africa, and he hosts a weekend radio show on KayaFM. He also works as an entrepreneur, speaker and writer. ProVerb grew up as the son of a doctor and a humanities professor in Kimberley and attended boarding school where he was first exposed to hip hop. After attending LNB (now Damelin) for sound engineering, ProVerb began producing his own music, becoming one of the most well respected and well known South African hip hop artists. Now the father of two, ProVerb continues his involvement in the hip hop industry as someone on the inside who assists in exposing new artists. He takes his role as a hip hop icon in the country seriously, so as to show future generations that anything is possible. As a result of his continued engagement with South African hip hop and his track record as an artist, ProVerb was approached for an interview for this project. Previous studies of South African hip hop had included some of ProVerb's early works so it was important to engage with the artist directly in an effort to further the academic body of work surrounding hip hop in South Africa.

v) *Reason:* Sizwe "Reason" Moeketsi and I met on the set of his video shoot with Maglera Doe Boy in the central business district of Johannesburg. Currently, Reason, 29, works as a creative and a musician in Johannesburg. Reason grew up in Katlehong in the East Rand and was first exposed to hip hop at basketball courts and

by artists like Nate Dogg and Snoop Dogg. After studying advertising at Vega on scholarship, Reason went on to release his own albums and become his own business. While for the purposes of the interview he chose to identify as a musician, it is important to note that Reason was invited to participate as a result of his position as a musician and as an art director, designer, his involvement with bringing up new artists in South Africa and for organizing hip hop events under the banner of Kool Out Entertainment. In addition to this, as part of my commitment to reflexivity, I think it is important to note that as a foreigner, it was Reason's song "Stay" (produced by Mr. Instro who was also interviewed) that first introduced me to South African hip hop.

vi) *Mr. Instro:* Sthembiso "Mr. Instro" Herimbi and I met each other on the same day as I met Reason at his video shoot in Johannesburg. Along with being a member and producer of the Kool Out Entertainment team, Mr. Instro, 30, also produces music under his own label, Promise Land Entertainment. Mr. Instro grew up in Sebokeng and studied sound engineering before beginning to work as a producer. Having worked with South African heavy weights such as Reason, Tumi and Okmalumkoolkat, Mr. Instro has embedded himself in the hip hop industry. In addition to his work with music, Mr. Instro also actively works to raise awareness of the importance of sobriety in the Black community. I would also be remiss not to note the impact of Mr. Instro's brother, Hopemasta, and his assistance with the project though time conflicts prevented us from scheduling an interview. It is clear that both of the Herimbi brothers will be increasingly significant in the hip hop industry as producers and artists in the coming years.

vii) *Brian Nkosi:* Brian Nkosi and I also met on the set of Reason and Maglera Doe Boy's music video. The director of the video, Brian, 25, proved to be an interesting man to interview given his experience as a sound designer who teaches at AFDA, The South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performance, and his experience having studied in Los Angeles at the New York Film Academy. For the most part, Brian provided another insight into the ways in which the hip hop industry provides opportunities and livelihoods, given that Brian is also a music video director in addition to being a professor and being signed to Raw X Studios to work in partnership with JHB Hive to create the Raw X Academy. This academy works towards bringing upcoming producers to work with prolific members of the hip hop industry.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In order to maintain a standard of ethics, a few procedures were put in place prior to beginning the research. Prior to scheduling an interview, participants were informed about how the research would be conducted and the research process. Upon deciding to participate, participants were offered the opportunity to view the interview schedule prior to their scheduled interview to think about what and how they might wish to contribute. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participant in locations that they were comfortable with. Prior to beginning the interview, participants consented to the use of an audio recording device and signed informed consent forms. Due to the nature of the project, participants also agreed to not remain anonymous, although they were informed that they could withdraw at any time and as such, all participants have agreed to have their real and stage names used throughout the research and are aware that

the finished product will be publicly accessible. These processes ensured that all participants, who were over the age of 18 and not members of vulnerable categories, gave informed consent and that their input to the project was dealt with along the highest standards of ethical consideration (Willig, 2013, p. 26).

3.5 Data Analysis

For the purposes of this study, all interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Following the transcription, I utilized the method of concept/theme driven coding based on the following themes stemming from my research questions: opportunities and employment in the hip hop industry, issues in society as perceived by the interviewee, gender and blackness (Gibbs, 2007, pp. 44-45). In addition to working with the chosen themes as my initial concepts, other themes and questions also emerged that will be further discussed within the discussion of the findings from the research, these themes encompassed the following: creative entrepreneurship as non-traditional but feasible, the precariousness of existence as Black men, Black economic marginalization in South Africa, the gravity of the situation of violence against Black women in South Africa.

As a result, it is important to note that the findings to be discussed in the following chapter are based on the research questions and other themes that emerged through an analysis of the participants' interviews.

3.6 Reflexivity and Research Limitations

The role of reflexivity is critical within this study given the researcher's position as an outsider to both the space and topic at hand. Despite my confidence in the chosen research methodology and ways of analyzing the data, it would be negligent to not acknowledge my positionality as a researcher and the struggles I have experienced that are associated with it, which constituted both limitations and advantages.

Moya (2011) notes how examining knowledge production from the non-West world is often difficult for the producers themselves. The reason for this is, as he notes, scholars of the non-West are subordinated and marginalized, and thus, so are their identities (pp. 84-85). This proves an intricate challenge for me to confront, as someone from the West who is attempting to recognize these "alternate perspectives and accounts generated through oppositional struggle" in order to complicate and challenge dominant concepts of what is going on in South African society (Moya, 2011, p. 85). As such, it is important that I am cognisant of how I am writing and how I am portraying my research participants and their knowledge that they have chosen to share with me.

In addition to the challenges associated with producing the final research project and being cognisant of how I write, I have also faced challenges in terms of my personal positionality. Since arriving in South Africa, I have been acutely aware of my whiteness. I stand out at all hip hop events, as I am usually the only white body there, and I am usually given special treatment due to perceptions about me that are created as a result of my whiteness. I have been able to gain access to artists that others may have had more difficulty in doing, but I believe this also stems from my position as a North American. Much in the same way that Tazanu (2012) discusses, I

may sometimes be mistaken for a journalist or someone with power in the hip hop industry in North America (pp. 37-38). While this has helped me, it has also led to some confusion and intrigue related to my presence and my motives for this project. More often than not, I have been lucky enough to have been welcomed into the inner circle of the hip hop world, which while helpful, has brought up the issue of me becoming not an insider, but not quite an outsider anymore (Tazanu, 2012, p. 53).

Being not quite an outsider but still not quite an insider has proved to be an interesting aspect of the research that I had not previously considered. While I could connect with the significance of the music and enjoy it, it has brought about the situation that research that goes on outside of the conducted interviews, whether intentional or not. Chaudhry (1997**)** is quite candid about this in noting how, outside of your intended research methodology, an ethnographic element almost always emerges as a result of spending time with your participants. In order to recognize this, I have carefully been keeping a journal of my experiences. From my day spent at the Back to the City Music Festival, to joining Reason on the set of his video shoot, I have been lucky to be able to immerse myself in numerous facets of the hip hop culture in a way that even South African hip hop fans do not always have the privilege of doing. It is also important for me to recognize my position has allowed me to do this. Part in part, I have been aware of the presence of the patriarchal bargain, where some males have allowed me access in the hopes of their ulterior motives coming to fruition or from an assumption that I had access to North American industries (Kandiyoti, 1998, p. 275). That being said, for the most part, I have found that there has been significant interest for the project and its goals for giving voice to an overly marginalized cultural product and those who produce it.

Despite this, I have experienced limitations. One of the first limitations of this research is with regards to the interviewees. While I was able to interview a number of individuals who allowed for a good representation of artists and a variety of members in the industry, other artists were also contacted. For the most part, these other artists were either unwilling or unable to participate in the project for a variety of reasons. It was my use of and navigation of the hip hop 'scene' in South Africa with Kandiyoti's (1988) idea of the patriarchal bargain that ultimately granted me access to some individuals that others may not have so easily accessed (p. 275). My presence as a woman, and as a white foreign woman specifically, caused me to largely stand out at events and venues, increasing the likelihood of my being able to access VIP areas and therefore these individuals. Many of the artists in South Africa still typically run their own social media accounts, meaning it might be possible for them to be accessed given the right approach. And while it was easy to approach these individuals thanks to my position and to my connections, being granted an interview and following through with an interview was difficult on occasion.

These difficulties stemmed from number of things. For most artists, their schedules and touring for recently released and upcoming albums made it difficult to secure a time and place in Johannesburg. On occasion, interview times were established but were then subsequently declined and the meeting was turned into a social rendezvous due to confusion which I would suggest comes from my presence as a woman and the assumption that I was a fan. And finally, some individuals opted to discuss the topics at hand casually but were not willing to participate in a formal interview for their own personal reasons. All of this is to say, the men I did end up interviewing were nothing but professional and helpful throughout the research process and I am

indebted to them for not only their assistance with the project but also for welcoming me into the hip hop world in South Africa.

Another limitation relates to how I intended to conduct the research compared with how I ended up conducting the research. Given that I intended my research to stem from the interviews, ethics forms were signed giving me access to all the data that came from our interviews but not necessarily from participant observation. Conversations that occurred outside of the realm of the formal interview cannot be included and attached to the individual speaker, given that all participants expressly agreed to be identifiable in the research project. Though some of my participants and I only met and spoke for the formal interview, there are some who regularly invited me to events and social occasions to meet other people and to also show me around Johannesburg. I did keep record of these within the aforementioned journal, more out of personal interest. In accordance with these experiences, I think that it would be interesting for future research to include participant observation and follow specific individuals to events and throughout their days to gain an insight into the functioning of the hip hop world in South Africa.

Although I am unable to speak directly from some conversations had with individuals who chose not to participate and individuals who did participate due to ethical considerations, some of these conversations still hold value for the project. The findings in the following section were expressed by a number of individuals inside and outside of the project who are extremely significant in the hip hop industry in South Africa. And as such, although not all of my requests for interviews were successful, I am confident in the findings expressed here from the sampling

of individuals who I did succeed in interviewing as a result of the corroboration afforded by conversations and experiences outside of the space of the formal interview.

I would like to invite the reader to consider my own growth as a researcher prior to delving into the findings in the following chapter. Prior to beginning the research, I had thought that if I remained objective, I would be able to avoid problematic aspects of researching groups one is an outsider to. However, throughout the research I came to recognize pitfalls arising from my position as an outsider that often made me feel uncomfortable and question my ability to complete the project. While I will explore this more within the final chapter, I think it is important to have acknowledged this prior to exploring the findings in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As previously mentioned, the main goal of this project was to determine the significance of South African hip hop for some Black[2] South African men. As such, it became apparent that hip hop had to be examined in terms of what it could provide in terms of livelihoods and opportunities for Black men, how it reflected the experiences of some Black South African men with socioeconomic issues, how artists choose to respond to these issues and also to look at the pervasiveness of hip hop as an industry in terms of supporting individuals who may not have other options. Some main themes emerged from the research that lent themselves to answering the established research questions: opportunity and employment, Black masculinity and specifically the social issues of Black economic marginalization and violence against women in South Africa.

For the most part, these themes intersect and constitute one another. Furthermore, it became evident that this project brought up other questions and allowed for a space to begin engaging with issues of transformation to further social justice, something important to consider given that this project was conducted within the discipline of Critical Diversity Studies (Steyn, 2015, pp. 387-388). Given this realization, these questions and ideas will also be further discussed within this section. It will first be important to tackle the initial themes as previously mentioned and some of the conversations that were had with participants that related to these prior to delving into other themes that emerged throughout the project.

4.1 Opportunity and Employment

On the theme of opportunity and employment, my findings suggested that hip hop represented a space that should be considered as creative entrepreneurship that can offer upward class mobility.

4.1.1 Creative Entrepreneurship: Non-Traditional but Feasible

What was made apparent through the literature review was the fact that entrepreneurs, and creative entrepreneurs in particular, were not often considered statistically in terms of employment and educational statistics. As Makiwane and Kwizera (2009) indicated, young people are affected by poor support for entrepreneurial ventures and career counselling in general (pp. 230-231). My interviews indicated that, for the most part, young people are encouraged to follow paths considered to secure success which was often defined as achieving middle class status. These paths were often understood by the men I interviewed as being roles wherein they would be working for other people. And while it is evident that the entrepreneurs I interviewed were all successful, their success in a non-traditional venture that they enjoyed often pleasantly surprised even themselves. Entrepreneurship in the creative industry affiliated with hip hop was non-traditional, but a feasible route for those interviewed. Although no formal education is required to be affiliated with hip hop, for those interviewed, becoming and remaining involved required its own learning curve. Additionally, it was made clear that working as an entrepreneur within the hip hop industry was important and provided individuals with a sense of fulfilment that may otherwise not have been possible.

> I think first of all it became real at some point in my life when I was like, wow you can actually be a professional musician and make money out of this, you can actually be a creative guy - think up ideas and make money out of this. You can actually put together parties and throw events together and make money out of this, and that happened at different stages of my life you know? But I think with hip hop music, because I was an intern at a radio station at a record label, and I was rolling with ProVerb, who was a big

> artist at the time, and I was his hype man on the side, like he was the guy… there was a lot of moments where I started realizing, shit, I can do this. I can actually do this… (Reason)

As previously mentioned, this study required the participation of people in the hip hop industry. What was discovered quite quickly was that none of those approached were merely artists or photographers of one specific genre. Rather, people who were approached boasted multiple sources of income all linked to various aspects of the creative industries and hip hop in particular. Reason illustrates this well. As someone who is primarily known as a rapper, he also works with other musicians and owns a company that organizes hip hop events in South Africa. For him, he noted how important it is to not simply be a musician. Learning from the examples of rappers in America like Jay-Z and Dr. Dre, Reason pointed out the importance of venturing outside of being an artist and involving himself in other aspects of the industry to ensure economic security and stability. These sentiments were echoed by other participants. Reason's mentor, ProVerb, also demonstrated that his participation in the hip hop industry did not begin and end at being ProVerb the rapper. On the contrary, ProVerb's reign in the industry has extended itself from being an artist to also being an advocate, a radio host and a television host. In this way, he pointed to hip hop as a tool for an entrepreneur and an avenue for opportunity, stating that "I think the days of coming with your hand out expecting your government to provide for you or some sort of system or just anyone else to come spoon feed you I think that those days are gone, now you have to create for yourself and hip hop is definitely one avenue where entrepreneurs thrive" (ProVerb).

Furthermore, through our discussions of the importance of the hip hop industry here, some indicated how the success of some artists and industry members provided inspiration for other

people in the country. Austin indicated that seeing the success of artists like Cassper Nyovest and Ricky Rik, who expanded from being hip hop artists to owning clothing companies and stores, record labels and being sponsored by multi-national corporations like Ciroc and Vaseline, pointed to the possibilities of entrepreneurship and the power of hip hop. In this, he also indicated strong feelings of autonomy, not having to rely on other people to pay him, but rather, being able to be self-reliant. In this way, entrepreneurs in the hip hop industry are going against the grain of societal expectations and rejecting the disadvantageous situations that many have come from, securing their own futures doing something they love. Reason also confirms this:

> …there's a lot of ownership in you being the talent, there's a lot of ownership in it because at the end of the day, a lot of people don't control a lot of the positions they in y'know what I mean? They don't control what they'd like to do today because you get paid to do this, you get told to do this and it's for somebody else, somebody else's company, somebody else's building. So to have some kind of ownership of something is actually quite good because you have room to grow a company, like you do a flower or a child or whatever (Reason)

While the end of apartheid has positioned some individuals so that they can access career paths leading to middle class lifestyles, the sentiment was reiterated amongst the participants that not everyone is built for a traditional nine-to-five. For Black men in particular, it was pointed out that hip hop as an industry provides an avenue to create opportunities for themselves that they loved rather than feeding into the typical corporations and industries owned and dominated by white capitalism. Slikour summed it up well when he pointed out that "there can't just be McDonald's, kids don't dream of that, there can't just be like a SASO or a BP or some DeLoitte, it can't just be that so we have a responsibility to create these environments…to create opportunity…in a music environment" that people can connect to and love and something that feeds their identities and their souls. In creating these environments like some of the participants have, they are shifting economic advantage to be in their favour and controlling their own

socioeconomic status. Career opportunities such as these had previously not been an option for Black men in South Africa. The history of apartheid and the labour system and constructions of masculinity associated with that that negatively affected Black men by making them feel a sense of powerlessness in the labour force (Ratele, 2001, pp. 247-248). These findings show that as an industry that enables feasible, non-traditional economic ventures, the hip hop industry has allowed a regaining of this power for some. The interviews pointed out that despite being a non-traditional economic venture, entrepreneurship in the creative industries and especially in the hip hop industry, proves to be not only feasible as a space for Blackness, but lucrative and affirming for the psyche, something which will also be further examined later.

4.2 Gender

This research focused on Black men, and as such, Black masculinity. On the theme of gender, I looked specifically at the understanding some of the men had in terms of how they experience their own identified gender. It is important to note that all of the men identified as heterosexual Black men, and as such, Black masculinity in this study does not include men who may identify differently as part of its scope so their experiences navigating those identities in the hip hop industry cannot be reflected here.

4.2.1 “Being a Black Man is an Extreme Sport”

As was made evident by the literature review, it was important that in conducting this research that the usual scripting of Black men in hip hop must be challenged through a critical engagement with Black men in hip hop. Therefore, I intended this research to become a space

that allowed for a conversation with some Black men in the hip hop industry to understand how they may or may not understand and feel about this scripting of themselves.

Firstly, it was important for me to consider what it meant to be a Black man in South Africa for some of my participants. Mr. Instro coined the phrase "being Black is an extreme sport" in our conversation about Blackness and being a Black man in South Africa and this became the definition that stuck with me the most and proved to be the most accurate representation of Black masculinity. He stated that being a Black man meant the following:

> … it means to be previously disadvantaged, I don't even know if I can still say 'previously' because it still feels like we're still fighting to completely emancipate ourselves and be free. So yeah I think it means to be disadvantaged more often than not and it means that you are overcomers. I think being a Black male is an extreme sport… because we generally have a bad reputation you know? A Black male is more often than not a suspect, you know he could be anywhere in the world, if a Black guy walks in it just becomes weird, everybody is like 'ok what's going on?'… being Black is an extreme sport because you're the number one suspect (Instro)

I think that this conversation tied into bell hooks' and Imani Perry's previous assertions of Black men existing as powerless entities. Not only does the white patriarchy control the economic and political structures, but they also control the basic social interactions that Mr. Instro spoke solemnly to me about. I would like to then invite an interrogation of studying Black masculinity in South Africa. While Mr. Instro pointed out that being a Black man is an extreme sport and I would argue that this undeniable in a global context as well, it is important to note that the findings of this study demonstrated that each man's Blackness was something they were always acutely aware of because of the balancing act they often felt burdened by throughout their day to day interactions.

Another of the participants, Brian, pointed out the importance of culture to the development of Black masculinities in South Africa as part of this balancing act. This, I argue, confirms the idea that Black masculinity in South Africa cannot be studied in the same way as it sometimes is in North America and Europe. This is something that Morrell (1998) indicates as being important to consider when thinking about Black masculinity in South Africa given the significance of indigenous social institutions. In our interview, Brian revealed thoughts that were in line with this, saying that being Black in South Africa meant a number of things, with one of the most important ones being the responsibility of a preservation of culture and heritage post-apartheid. As a self-identified Zulu from the KwaZulu-Natal region, Brian was very firm in his belief that the maintenance of culture was imperative for Blackness in South Africa. Maintaining culture also tied into the development of masculinity for him. Being a Zulu and being a man were linked for him. I think that this cognisance and protectiveness surrounding these aspects of his identity came from Brian's experience living and studying in Los Angeles, so he did speak about what it meant to be a Zulu man versus being a Black man in America. From his experience in the two contexts, it was clear that for him, being Zulu and being Black were not necessarily the same thing and did not share the same meanings. While Blackness may often be conflated with ethnicity in South Africa, in reality, this is not the case. It was made clear that worldwide, anyone who appears Black must participate in society as this 'extreme sport' that Mr. Instro defined in order to survive. But what must be kept in mind with regards to Black masculinity in South Africa are the ties to indigenous social institutions that create senses of pride and community from specific expectations put on boys and men at different stages of their lives.

In addition to discussing the cultural significance of Black masculinity and the ties of masculinity to culture, my interviews also exposed challenges associated with Black masculinity that some Black men felt are not taken as seriously as they should be. Austin indicated to me that these cultural and gendered expectations felt by some men causes feelings of inadequacy should they fail to live up to these social and cultural expectations.

> … people don't really understand the masculinity side, that when you're raised as a [Black] man you always need to be the head of the house and stuff like that y'know… a lot of Black males feel inferior when their lady counterparts earn more than them or are able to do more things by themselves because when you are the man of the house everything is done by you, you're supposed to be bigger paycheck, you're supposed to be the leader of the house now when that gets overridden by a lady it takes all of your powers… (Austin)

While this may initially seem cringe worthy for many a feminist, I think it is worth unpacking these sentiments. What Austin is discussing here ties into the next section wherein I explore the pressures that Black men experience in South Africa. The feelings that Austin indicated here echo much of the Black masculinity work on Black men's feelings of emasculation during apartheid. Though important to consider these feelings as a result of current social issues, it would be ignorant to completely ignore the history of apartheid that emasculated men economically and socially and the existing class inequality that perpetuates these issues. Such unequal institutions still exist and maintain an environment wherein men have been unable to reconcile years of Black emasculation (Ratele, 1998, pp. 61-63; Morrell, 2001, p. 18). Austin's comments are reflective of a critique of masculinist assumptions and the complexities of the pressure that some men feel. Not only are some expectations difficult to meet due to socioeconomic inequalities, but the added pressure of having to meet these demands despite the inequalities cause feelings of stress and anxiety that Austin also pointed out.

Brian also reiterates Austin's sentiments, pointing out that despite the supposed abundance of opportunity available for Black men in South Africa now, that does not necessarily mean that the damage of apartheid is being reversed. Brian pointed out that his perception was for most men to even be considered for things like Black Economic Empowerment, one had to have had access to a certain level of education, something that men are falling through the cracks on which Hill et al. (2012) pointed out in terms of their transition success rates between primary and secondary levels of education (p. 247). As a result, if one has not had access to this education and therefore cannot access things like BEE, Brian states "you're actually furthermore oppressed, you're still treated like the old days if not worse".

This discrepancy between opportunity and access to opportunity is something that Slikour also discussed in terms of its ties to Black masculinity. For Slikour, Black men would be continually emasculated and psychologically damaged so long as inaccessible opportunities are paraded in front of them.

> … Black men are frustrated because they're tryna make themselves something, they've been sold a dream that this is their world… but they're not given the tools and the people who… are like literally driving this conversation and have money are creating this expectation with their wives and with their kids … The world and the media and the government says that there's opportunity but there's no opportunity so our parents, our brothers, are literally under pressure to be all these things, of these men who have all these wealth and these riches but there are no opportunities to create that so it's not only government but it's also the white private sector that keeps money within themselves you know, so that's the thing the challenge of Black men is literally this misconception that there's opportunity for them. (Slikour)

I would add too that these feelings and critiques make up common pervasive themes in hip hop music that many of the people interviewed mentioned as being what ultimately drew them to hip hop. Austin, Brian and Slikour's comments with regards to pressures of being a man and its attachment to taking advantage of opportunities that are not always there reflect deeper issues in

South African society. From cultural demands that intersect with socioeconomic realities, Black men experience a fragility in their masculinity given the precariousness of their socioeconomic positions. As such, the examination of how these entrepreneurs have regained control by being successful with the hip hop industry in a country plagued by nepotism reiterates how transgressive hip hop is, as an art form and as an industry given that it has allowed for a space for Black men to seize control over their own lives and economic success.

4.3 Issues in South African Society

On the theme of issues in South African society, a number of issues were discussed. The two msot common issues amongst each participant were Black economic marginalization and violence against women. Though it could be argued that the latter came as a result of the increased media attention of violence perpetrated against women, I think that even if this was the case, it was beneficial for this project given the fact that violence against women has been so pervasive for so long. The increased awareness of the issue allowed for more interest in engaging with the topic, which is what I felt happened in my interviews. However, prior to delving into these discussions, I will first present my findings with regards to Black economic marginalization being a major issue in South Africa.

4.3.1 Black Economic Marginalization

Discussions of what it meant to be a man and issues in South African society corroborated the fact that economic marginalization is directly linked to performances of masculinity and frustrations associated with it.

Haupt (2003) pointed out how hip hop in South Africa is a valuable tool to express social inequalities (p. 26). The reason that the music is able to express these inequalities is ultimately because the individuals behind the music are aware of it and interrogate it in their everyday lives. Gilroy (1993) confirms this in saying that the counter-hegemonic discourse that hip hop is reflects inarguable social inequalities of spaces that they exist in (p. 16). One of the men, interviewed, Rashid, considered poverty and unemployment to be some of the biggest issues in South Africa and that the control of the economy is in the hands of white people. For him, he had confronted the inequality when approaching white owned corporations for funding for the major hip hop event in South Africa, the Back to the City Music Festival. He noted how donors were less interested in funding a festival guaranteeing crowds of over 20,000 but would over fund white dominant events like Woodstock that could barely guarantee over 5,000 visitors[3]. This speaks back to the awareness of racial inequality and tension in South Africa. In my conversation with Austin Malema, he also indicated that despite policies in place supposedly supporting equal access to economic opportunities for all races, the reality is that Black people do not have the same "fair chances and equal opportunities as Caucasians" (Austin). Throughout my time in South Africa, I would also suggest through my social interactions with a variety of people that racism and the expectation of experiencing racism still dictates many people's behaviours. This appeared throughout my interviews, as some of the men demonstrated a hesitancy in having to collaborate with white owned companies. This not only reflected their feelings of being socially

[3] This comparison is one that begs the question of buying power. While the decision to fund a largely white festival may be an economic decision by a company, it can reflect the awareness that Black South Africans may not have the same buying power that the minority white population has. That being said, this lack of buying power stems from class inequality that continues to exist.

and economically marginalized, but I would suggest that this leads to ideas of a Black disempowerment.

All of the participants were aware of the ways in which Black economic marginalization tied into this disempowerment of Black identity. Mr. Instro pointed to this in terms of how economic poverty also becomes an issue of the psyche:

> Yoh! I'd say the biggest [issue] is poverty. I think that's my biggest concern because and when I mean poverty I'm not talking about poor people. I'm talking about poverty in the sense that we lack ways of educating ourselves and progressing ourselves. You could have a lot of money and still be in poverty because your mind isn't right. A colonized mind an impoverished mind. (Mr. Instro).

While this speaks back to some men feeling pressured in seemingly hopeless situations, Mr. Instro's sentiments also tie into Slikour's comment about how it does not matter if there are opportunities for Black people if they are inaccessible to Black people. On the other hand, while ProVerb still pointed out an awareness of this issue, he seemed more optimistic about the situation, pointing out that there have in recent years been success stories but that there is still work to be done. He was also able to articulate the importance of hip hop in being able to speak out about the economic marginalization of Black people as a whole.

> "… the Black South African is still sort of fighting for freedom economically, you know? And I think hip hop is one of the tools where we can not only voice and speak about it and bring it to the fore but also use it as a tool to start positioning ourselves as economic equals and I think there's definitely success stories, there may be few and far between but we've definitely made a lot of strides so you know economic equality is definitely it." (ProVerb)

These sentiments echo back to the importance of listening to participants. All of the participants mentioned were aware of Black economic marginalization and poverty as a major social issue in South Africa. Not only this, but they were also very aware of what was needed in terms of transformation. I would argue that the reason for this stems from their awareness of Black

economic success being seen as exceptional. Additionally, an understanding that despite the rapidly transitioning cultural space that the men exist in, it is clear that the past and present experiences of the participants have made them aware of these issues and how to confront them for the future of South Africa (p. 317). That being said, I did get the impression from some that small change was better none, giving me the impression that their expectations for social transformation was extremely low, while others were rather despondent about it.

4.3.2 Violence Against Women

In addition to participants identifying Black economic marginalization as being a significant issue for some Black South African men, the participants also identified violence against women as being a pressing social issue in South Africa. To return to Chaudhry (1997), there always exists an ethnographic element to research. As a woman from outside of a South African context, I was acutely aware of the safety issues for women. Shortly after my arrival, social media exploded with multiple incidents of Black women being raped in taxis, the murder of Karabo Mokoena and other incidents of violence that can only rightly be called Femicide. My position as a foreigner is important to consider, as I am confident that my positionality is what allowed some of the participants to feel as if they could be more candid with me about how they grappled with discussing violence against women in South Africa. This candidness often reflected deeply embedded and problematic patriarchal values. Simultaneously, the men expressed concerns over violence against women without always reflecting on the way they were implicated in these patriarchal structures.

> … there's a lot of unresolved issues like people are really angry and it's so sad and unfortunate that they direct that anger towards women you know because most of them can't protect themselves. So right now in Johannesburg, not even Johannesburg, all of South Africa, every day we hear stories in Cape Town, Durban, a woman is missing, a

> woman is found dead, it's really crazy man, that's the biggest problem we have right now… (Rashid)

The majority of the participants identified violence against women as a pressing issue in South Africa. While they were also aware of where the violence stemmed from, they did not generally acknowledge the ways in which they were complicit in systems from which this violence stems. Most of the men argued that violence against women largely came as a result of the frustration of Black men to their sense of powerlessness in South Africa. Without specifically saying it, I often had the impression that to the interviewees, violence against women was being caused by this image of impoverished Black men from townships and rural areas which is not the reality of the situation. In the same vein, there was a recognition that violence against women is wrong and goes against these previously discussed cultural expectations of men. What I found interesting was how the men I interviewed try to present themselves as being as active as possible in the fight against violence against women by working with women's groups and being very vocal on social media platforms. While I found the intentions of the men to be good, I often felt as if the men were still deeply entrenched in patriarchal ways of thinking. This entrenchment, rather than being faced, was often hidden with sentiments that because they acknowledged gender inequality, they were exceptions to the rule of feelings such as #MenAreTrash. And some of the men quite frankly, seemed to feel threatened and frustrated by these campaigns rather than understanding the intention behind the message. As a result, I often felt as if this exceptionalism was used as a scapegoat to acknowledging and critically engaging with the entrenchment of patriarchal sentiments in their own minds.

Another point to note in my conversations relates to the language that the men used. The participants used the term "violence against women" but I would like to indicate that what they

really meant is *violence against BLACK women.* Even in the interviews where race was not directly indicated when discussing violence against women, it was obvious that the men were speaking about Black women experiencing violence. In spite of the fact that the participants all acknowledged the pervasiveness of violence against Black women in the country, they were not necessarily the most optimistic about ideas to resolve the epidemic. This, I think, stemmed mostly from my previous assertion that the men were not actively confronting patriarchal values they exist within. For the most part, the men seemed to have a collective understanding that violence against women had to stop but that it is a part of the quest for gender equality which is something that they realize cannot happen overnight. The reasons for gender equality not being something easily and quickly achieved was often seen as an issue not needed for the men interviewed, but rather, a problem that other men were a part of. That being said, most of the participants acknowledged that the way to resolving societal issues starts at home, something that I feel Reason articulates well in the following:

> I honestly feel like my immediate circle is my biggest project. My kids are my biggest project. My friends. The things we say to girls, the things we offer people you know? … if you can't communicate a message of support to a person who is very close to you to keep them or try and help them get off something they're not trying to be involved in, it's very difficult for me to see you being able to do it for thousands and ten thousands of other people in the world and I feel like people don't realize that that's actually how small it needs to be (Reason)

This point brought up something that was touched on repeatedly, though not explicitly mentioned within the interviews. This is an issue of the pervasiveness of institutional inequality in the Black man's psyche. Given that the scope of this project is that of Black men in the hip hop industry, it is important to consider hip hop as capable of being a space for Black cultural identity. While this does not speak directly and explicitly to the issue of violence against women,

I think it would be neglectful of me to not identify it as a causal force in this violence against women and against other Black men.

My interview with Slikour clearly called attention to this when he spoke about the struggle of being Black.

> Let me tell you about being Black, the Black struggle is so real that for me to be sitting here… I have literally gotten away from so much. If you wake up and your uncle is a drunk and your mom works at like a shopping centre or she's a nurse and like someone is getting shot the next day… where in the world do you get the headspace of believing that you can be anything better?
> 80-90% of the Black people that you are seeing are from those environments, right?
> Well literally if I am working in a white world or white business with kids who go back to their white suburbs where they literally like, can see aspiration everywhere if they choose to see it you know? We have to struggle to find it, you know? So there is a difference, every Black person that I believe, male or female, we have to struggle to find aspiration… that's why rap resonated so much to me because it literally took me out, it was the most progressive thing I saw in my life, in the hood and where I came from. They were the most progressive Black people I saw from where I came from and the way they talked, I'd never seen Black people talk like that and be so happy and even if they're not happy, be so poetic and be so progressive and be so cultural and love themselves. I saw that through rap, but I never saw it in my community… That's just a general Black problem in South Africa, I mean maybe it's across the world with every Black people and every Black person from every Black community, I mean they purposefully put us in a place where there's no hope, purposefully put us in a place where we can't respect ourselves and appreciate ourselves… (Slikour)

These feelings of hip hop touching the Black psyche and being there when the rest of one's reality is not were reiterated through all of the interviews I conducted in one way or another. However, Slikour poignantly noted the space of exceptionalism that Black success inhabited. For him, Black artists and the cultural space of hip hop shifted these ideas of what it means to be successful. This reiterated not only the literature previously examined that looked at hip hop as a carrier of Black culture, but also tied into how hip hop acts as an expression of the normalization of oppression Black people face every day which is why hip hop as music and as an industry is so transgressive (Steyn, 2015, pp. 383-384). I think Slikour's comments here are also valuable in

terms of feelings. When asked about opportunity in South Africa, Slikour in particular seemed to feel rather pessimistic about the future, but when discussing hip hop, was totally different. In fact, Slikour notes specifically that the only happy Black people he had seen growing up were those in hip hop and that chance for happiness is what gave him more hope than things like BEE. The way that these men are aware of the importance of reclaiming the Black man's psyche and hip hop's usefulness for it also points to their own engagement with day to day transformation to one day achieve social justice, something crucial and refreshing to come out of this research (Steyn, 2015, pp. 387-388).

4.4 What is Hip Hop in South Africa?

An important thing to come of my discussions with the participants was perhaps a clearer understanding of what hip hop is in South Africa. As previously noted, some people consider *kwaito* to be South African hip hop (Steingo, 2005, p. 340). Given the timing of the research that amalgamated *kwaito* and hip hop, it could have been understandable. However, as a result of the massive growth of South African hip hope in the last five years, *kwaito* and hip hop have become separate entities which was generally agreed upon by the participants. And for research on the topics moving forward, I think that this differentiation is important to keep in mind.

With regards to hip hop's link to *kwaito*, for the most part, the participants who are artists identified the two genres as coming from the same heart but being respectfully different. Slikour noted that both genres are about "young people who are being marginalized, young people who wanted to express themselves." Much in the same way, ProVerb pointed out that kwaito, "like hip hop, it's just a tool that was used and it was the voice of the young South African" but noted

that hip hop allowed for fewer creative limitations and was able to transgress linguistic and therefore geographic borders for commercial purposes. It was this transgression of linguistic and geographic borders that resulted in the hip hop in South Africa being held in opposition to African-American hip hop and brought up discussions of inauthentic versus authentic hip hop.

Deeming an artist inauthentic or authentic in South Africa seemed to be largely based on each individual's preference. It seemed to largely coincide with the artist's use of language, with artists who typically rapped in languages such as Zulu being deemed more authentic. Either way, the South African hip hop industry has provided a space for these artists as well. This was clear in how Mr. Instro discussed other artists, "there's nothing as sad as being an artist and not expressing yourself the way you want to and from what I can see everyone is just doing what they feel they should do like I never would've imagined a world with an Okmalumkoolkat sound because that for me when I first heard it, I was like yo this is different, I don't know if people are gonna gel with it and surprisingly I was wrong and I was happy that I was wrong." This topic of authenticity also relayed back to the opposition of South African hip hop in opposition to African-American hip hop. Reason pointed out that even if the music is seen as similar to its American counterparts, there is still an undeniable South African interpretation that has shifted with the change in generation. He pointed out that music from first generation artists like Prophets of Da City and Skwatta Kamp are not the same and not from the same contexts as those from today's artists, even those artists who dominated from the early 2000s like ProVerb. For Reason, "the one thing we didn't inherit was the interpretation. I think everyone takes what we receive and then they just give it out differently so to say when hip hop kinda started I think

everyone has a different story" and it is these stories that make hip hop reflective of a current time, space and experience.

4.5 Potential Implications of the Research

Throughout this research, I have been cognisant of the importance of reflexivity and creating a space for participants to speak from their experiences and to ensure that the research questions are largely answered by the individuals who live the realities associated with them. And while my final conclusions will be examined later, I think it is important to discuss the implications that this research has had in bringing up other questions.

This research has predominantly explored the feelings of socioeconomic powerlessness for some Black men and its ties to violence against women. That being said, it has also revealed the difficulty some men feel in participating in discussions surrounding gender equality and feminism. It has also affirmed that some men feel intimidated by ideas of gender equality because of the precariousness of their own socioeconomic statuses and the sociocultural pressures on them as men. As such, this project has raised the following question: how can we include Black men in the conversation on gender equality? While the answer may seem simple, I would suggest that it is not. Though I must acknowledge my position as a woman within our conversations, I would say that most of the men I interviewed were ready and willing to participate in conversations about gender equality but were often discouraged because they felt that they were being attacked. Some even went as far as to say that they themselves were unclear about what gender equality actually meant because of their experiences with some women. So, for them, the question of what gender equality is, arose. From my conversations with the

participants, it seems that most men are willing to have these conversations and that the men in the hip hop industry who I spoke with, are willing to use their platforms to talk about gender equality and to talk about putting a stop to violence against women. And I think that this willingness is important to consider and would be something worth working with them to facilitate and encourage these critical conversations.

In addition to the topic of including men on the conversation of gender equality, this research also brought up the importance of hip hop as music and as an industry. The connection between the two is undeniable and understandable, though not often examined. As the literature review revealed, hip hop as an industry is not often examined, though the music is. Hip hop as a politically and socially transgressive social text reveals its power as an industry as well. I argue then, that hip hop as an industry has allowed, and in relation to the scope of this project, specifically creative entrepreneurs, an opportunity to create their own opportunities and to transgress the expectations of what success means because the definition of socioeconomic success has been defined by these white patriarchal structures.

Finally, although some of the things discussed were emotive or painted a negative image of South Africa, for the most part, the participants indicated a sense of optimism for the future in one way or another. That despite the issues at hand, and they were acknowledged as serious issues, the future of South Africa was bright. For all of the participants, they were also aware of their role in being able to achieve this future that they are optimistic about. In addition to this, they were also acutely aware of the importance of creative entrepreneurship to not only the Black psyche but also to the future economic success of Black people. The participants were also aware

of the importance of hip hop and its relationship to this future because of their own personal experiences with it. As Slikour pointed out, “I had the fire all the time but rap kept on showing me the tools and it’s just how I utilize them in my world you know?” He suggests that without hip hop, the fire would have been extinguished. As a result of this, I argue that this research has pointed to the fact that it is of utmost importance that hip hop as music and as an industry be taken seriously and supported.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

All in all, *From Tsotsi to Mswenko: South African Hip Hop's Significance for Black South African Men* points to not only the importance of hip hop music but also the importance of the hip hop industry to some Black men in South Africa. I argue that this research provides an important understanding into the relationship of the hip hop industry in South Africa with social issues that the participants as Black men experience and interrogate daily.

As previously mentioned, hip hop is often studied as a by-product of the Black experience in North America. I argue that the South African context of this research supports the argument that hip hop as Black music reveals Gilroy's (1993) assertions about the transnationality of Black Atlantic creativity (p. 16). While being cognisant of the links of Black experience worldwide, studying South African hip hop as a by-product of South African experience rather than globalization values what it is that the artists are saying and what the industry is doing. Furthermore, in recognizing the ownership and validating the interpretation of the artists in South Africa, I argue that this research has tried to steer away from the tendency in Western knowledge production that belittles the significance of intellectual and creative cultural products outside of the West. It was crucial that I not fall into the trope of seeing this industry as less significant and important than African-American hip hop (Moya, 2011, pp. 82-85). Moreover, in being cognisant of my positionality and the ways in which hip hop outside of North America is usually scripted, I argue that my research has allowed for the answers to the research questions and further research implications to come from the participants themselves. The reason stems not only from my chosen research methodology but also from my cognisance of my positionality as a researcher (Nuttall & Michael, 2000a, pp. 22-23; Cruz, 2008, p. 652).

In addition to recognizing South African hip hop's autonomy as music and as an industry, this research has highlighted some of the struggles with Black masculinity in South Africa. With the shaping of this masculinity deeply imbedded with social, economic and cultural realities, the research has provided insight into what it means to be a man in South Africa and probed some of the artist' responses to Black men being seen as violent, their views on where this came from and what solutions for it could be. I think that my position as a foreign white woman allowed for some of the participants to reflect on the vulnerability and struggle associated with being a Black man in South Africa. This avoided the demonization that Ratele (2014) and hooks (1994) both discuss at length, warning those studying Black men and Black men in hip hop to not continue this trend of demonizing men who exist in worlds where they have little economic and political control and the control they do have are at odds with the gendered sociocultural expectations placed on them.

Finally, I would also suggest that this project has shed light on the ways in which hip hop as an industry provides a space for Black men to regain control over their own lives. While it was seen as being a non-traditional venture and a difficult road to success, entrepreneurship within the creative industries associated with hip hop were seen as an opportunity that could prove to be quite lucrative and meaningful. In this way, hip hop, as an increasingly growing industry acts as a space for Black men to be unapologetically Black and to be successful in an economy that has been established to maintain a white patriarchal control that has resulted in the reduction in life opportunities for Black men (Hill et. al, 2012, p. 247).

In addition to opening up the way in which topics like Black masculinity, hip hop in South Africa and creative entrepreneurship in South Africa can be handled, the project has been able to resolve its initial questions as well as bring to light other questions and themes for consideration for future projects.

Firstly, it has been clear that hip hop as an industry directly and indirectly provides livelihoods and opportunities for some Black men. Given that all of the participants were involved in the industry in one way or another, it is evident that there are opportunities for not only creative entrepreneurs, but also for other professionals. For example, while individuals like Austin were entrepreneurs, other individuals such as Slikour used their companies to hire Black professionals like lawyers and accountants who had a vested interest in the hip hop industry. This therefor means that the entrepreneurial success of some ends up providing livelihoods and opportunities for others who choose to work with them in small (but growing) business settings.

Secondly, hip hop in South Africa reflects the experiences some Black South African men have with socioeconomic issues. As was evident throughout the interviews, major issues in South Africa relate to Black economic marginalization which causes other problems such as violence against women and the pervasive weight of awareness of institutional inequality on the psyche of the Black men interviewed. And thirdly, this research has revealed that artists and people in the industry are aware of these social issues and actively try to use their platforms to fight against these issues and encourage Black community upliftment. Furthermore, the space of hip hop lends itself to an interrogation of these social issues in the South African context and also allows itself to be a space for the men to reclaim their identities through a sense of cultural and economic

control. It became clear that without hip hop, many of the participants would have either chosen to work a traditional nine to five or may have ended up on a very different path due to a lack of inspiration and a lack of hope. In this way, I argue that this project has revealed the value of hip hop as a space of solace for Blackness and a space for transgression of sociocultural norms and expectations.

In addition to this, this project has also revealed other themes to take into consideration. The first is how Black men can participate in conversations surrounding gender equality and why the way these conversations are currently undertaken are often experienced as threatening. In addition to this, the project has also positioned hip hop as a unique entity, though similar to other genres in South Africa. Ceasing to conflate hip hop with kwaito allows for a better understanding of hip hop's power in its ability to transgress borders and still hold value for Black communities worldwide. And finally, the project has also revealed the importance of hip hop as an industry rather than just as a cultural text.

Overall, *From Tsotsi to Mswenko* as a project contributes towards shifting powerful ideological assumptions about Black men in the hip hop industry by allowing men in the industry to speak to their experiences and allow theorizing about the industry and about issues in South Africa to come from them rather than from the researcher.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

- What is your name?
- Age?
- What do you do?
- How do you see yourself in terms of nationality, gender, etc.?
    - What does it mean to you to be Black? To be South African? To be a man?
- Can you tell me about where and how you grew up?
    - What do you remember life being like for the men in your family?
    - What was your experience like at school?
- When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?
    - If it did not happen, why not?
- How were you introduced to hip hop?
    - What is one of your favourite memories that involved hip hop that happened when you were younger?
- Did you go to tertiary?
    - If not, why not?
    - If yes, what did you study? What was your experience like there?
- Do you have children?
    - if yes, can you tell me about them? Do you worry about how their life may turn out? What sort of opportunities do you hope they have?
- Where did hip hop come from in South Africa? What/who are the biggest influencers of it?

- What was your big break?
- What do you think about the hip hop industry in South Africa now in terms of what it is doing for you?
    - What do you think it is doing for South Africans as a whole?
- How important do you think South African entrepreneurship in the creative industries is? What do you think some of the biggest obstacles are in the industry right now?
- What do you think are important issues in society right now?
    - How do you try to respond to these issues?
- What do you think are some of the biggest issues in SA right now for Black men in particular?
- What do you think hip hop means to some Black South African men?
- What is the biggest change you want to see in South Africa in your lifetime?
- What are and have been important messages for you to deliver?
- If it wasn't for hip hop, what do you think your life and career as a photographer would look like?

Appendix B: Participant Platforms

- Austin Malema
    - Instagram: @aust_malema
    - Twitter: @austinmalema
    - Austinmpho91.myportfolio.com
- Rashid Kay
    - Instagram: @rashid_kay
    - Twitter: @rashid_kay
- Reason
    - Instagram: @reasonhd_
    - Twitter: @reasonhd
- ProVerb
    - Instagram: @proverbmusic
    - Twitter: @proverbmusic
    - Proverbmusic.net
- Brian Nkosi
    - Instagram: @brianohaze
- Mr. Instro
    - Instagram: @mr_instro
    - Twitter: @mr_instro
    - Promiselandent.co.za
- Slikour
    - Instagram: @slikouronlife

- Twitter: @slikouron
- Slikouronlife.co.za

Appendix C: Transcripts

As a result of financial support of the DST-NRF South African Chair in Critical Diversity Studies and the lengthiness of the transcriptions, transcriptions of the interviews are publicly accessible within their archives.