HIP-HOP HEADS: THE SOCIAL WORLD OF MUSICAL PERFORMERS IN POST-APARTHEID CAPE TOWN

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Abstract

This thesis provides an ethnographic account of Cape Town’s vibrant underground hip-hop scene. Centring on the social world of rappers or ‘MCs’, this participant observation, conducted over a period of 12 months, draws upon the attendance at over 80 musical performances and dozens of recording and rehearsal sessions, participation as a co-host on a weekly hip-hop radio show, the conduct of 20 semi-structured interviews, alongside sustained and meaningful contact with 67 individual respondents, and the collection of a multitude of relevant documents and creative artefacts. The project argues that the experiences of becoming, belonging and participating as a hip-hop head in Cape Town can be understood by identifying various social processes at work. In this endeavour, the empirical themes of ‘community’, ‘hustling’ and ‘authenticity’, which are key reference points within the culture, are considered.

Considerable attention is afforded to the various shifts and continuities in post-apartheid social life and their effect on the functioning and structure of hip-hop practice. For instance, while most respondents enjoy unprecedented freedoms and opportunities, the research reveals that hip-hop communities in the city map onto apartheid era racial classifications. These groupings are formed through processes of socialization, identity formation and cooperation, and boundaries are created by the exclusionary mechanisms of differentiation, inequality and discrimination. Membership in these communities largely frame artists’ entrepreneurial activities or ‘hustles’ by determining the type and degree of social and economic capital young musicians can draw upon. This act of hustling is also found to be a highly valued activity that is predominately enacted within the informal economy. The concept of authenticity is shown to be the primary mode of distinction among hip-hop practitioners and is examined as a negotiated performance involving processes of claims making, validation and boundary-formation. Within this unique urban environment, the analysed data unravels a multilayered story, illustrating the variety of experiences involved in being a Cape Town hip-hop head.
Dedication

For Chrissie and Parky
Acknowledgement

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Tyrone DaSilva; Tumi; UCT Radio; Uno July; X the 24th Letter; Young Lee and especially Yanga Qinga.
## Contents

List of tables xi
List of figures xii

### CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Setting the scene 1
1.2. The hip-hop movement and a note on racial terminology 6
1.3. Aims and objectives 7
1.4. Research questions and scope of study 9
1.5. Rationale 11
1.6. Thesis overview 16

### CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction: music and sociology 18
2.2. Hip-hop scholarship 24
2.3. Understanding race and ethnicity in South Africa 26
2.4. Musicians’ livelihoods 32
   3.4.1. Employment within the creative fields 32
   3.4.2. The informal economy, social capital and trust 35
2.5. Community 40
   3.5.1. Approaching community 40
   3.5.2. Online and virtual communities 43
2.6. Manufacturing authenticity 44
   2.6.1. Authentic hip-hop 44
   2.6.2. The production of culture perspective 47

### CHAPTER 3. THE CITY AND PEOPLE OF CAPE TOWN

3.1. The city of Cape Town 50
3.2. Racial separateness 55
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1.</td>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.</td>
<td>Social separation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3.</td>
<td>Identity and language</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.</td>
<td>Research context</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1.</td>
<td>Township life</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.</td>
<td>Being young in Cape Town</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3.</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.</td>
<td>Pursuing hip-hop in Cape Town</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1.</td>
<td>The musical and cultural industries</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.</td>
<td>The hip-hop movement</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.</td>
<td>Concluding comments</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY: APPROACHES AND COMPROMISES IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK** 88

<p>| 4.1.    | Introduction                                        | 88   |
| 4.2.    | Gaining access and acceptance                       | 89   |
| 4.2.1.  | Accessing hip-hop spaces                            | 89   |
| 4.2.2.  | ‘Get your haircut and get a job’…and get out of town?: Justifying presence and establishing rapport | 92   |
| 4.2.3.  | Getting involved: identifying appropriate sites and negotiating roles in the field | 96   |
| 4.3.    | Challenges of the field                             | 106  |
| 4.3.1.  | Confronting dangerous fieldwork conditions          | 106  |
| 4.3.2.  | Managing factionalism and pursuing research in a divided city | 111  |
| 4.3.3.  | ‘Can you kick a freestyle?’: Learning and living hip-hop | 113  |
| 4.4.    | Generating and analysing data                       | 116  |
| 4.4.1.  | Generating data                                     | 116  |
| 4.4.2.  | Triangulation and the pursuit of accurate data       | 120  |
| 4.4.3.  | Approaching analysis                                | 123  |
| 4.5.    | Ethical research                                    | 124  |
| 4.5.1.  | Skirting the boundaries of honesty and illegality: ethnographic confessions and misdemeanours | 124  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2. ‘Only if you call me Pedro Fernandez’: issues of anonymity</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3. ‘Don’t quote me on that’: the rights, wrongs and practicalities of gaining informed consent</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.4. Reciprocity during fieldwork and beyond</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.6. Epistemological and philosophical reflections on researching within the ethnographic tradition</strong></td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1. Ethnographic understanding</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2. Reflexivity and objectivity</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.7. Reflections on method</strong></td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 5. COMMUNITY, SOLIADRITY AND DIVISION IN CAPE TOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1. The battle of the year</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.2. Community membership</strong></td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1. Collective identity</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3. Solidarity and ubuntu</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4. Cooperation and collaboration</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.3. Boundary creation and exclusionary practices</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1. Differentiation</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2. Inequality and competition</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3. Discrimination</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.4. Fostering community</strong></td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1. Internal initiatives</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2. External initiatives</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3. Evaluating outcomes</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.5. The extension of community</strong></td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.1. Multiregional</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.2. Global</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.3. Virtual</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.6. Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 6. THE HIP-HOP HUSTLE: A LIFESTYLE AND A LIVELIHOOD**

184
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1. Introduction</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. Contemplations on method</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. Empirical findings and theoretical reflections</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4. Contribution and further research</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### List of Tables

3.1. Census returns for the Western Cape and South Africa  
3.2. Poverty index by province  
3.3. Distribution of the population by labour market status and ethnicity  
3.4. Occupational distribution of the employed in each population group  
3.5. Distribution of the population by first home language  
4.1. Membership roles during fieldwork  
4.2. Observer stances during fieldwork
### List of Figures

1.1. People gather to watch the weekly park jam in Gugulethu 3
1.2. A performer entertains the crowd 4
3.1. The provinces of South Africa 50
3.2. Simplified ‘model apartheid city’ 60
4.1. A flyer advertising a Cape Town hip-hop performance 90
4.2. Mors spraying the interior of ‘Iron Fist’ clothing store on Kloof Street 98
4.3. Reason being interviewed at Bush radio 99
4.4. Dla of Driemanskap signs for Pioneer Unit 100
4.5. The Planetary Assault launch party 101
4.6. Presenting ‘Gazza’s gig guide’ on UCT radio 102
4.7. Helping out on the ‘Let’s do this’ video shoot 103
4.8. ‘The CD factory’: Lolo makes mixtapes at my flat in Cape Town 104
4.9. TOP writing lyrics in his backyard in Gugulethu 105
4.10. Travelling to early morning rehearsals in the back of a pick-up truck 112
4.11. TOP and Grits perform in numerous photographers 119
4.12. A park jam audience member records Sole freestyling 119
4.13. TOP rolls a joint while being interviewed by e.tv 125
4.14. Aiden and me at my parents’ home in London 132
4.15. Midus begins work on my commissioned piece, ‘Welcome 2 Cape Town’ 138
4.16. Midus poses with the finished piece 139
5.1. University’s of Cape Town’s upper campus in Rondebosch 143
5.2. Ben Sharpa’s support gathering 152
5.3. Traditional dancers in the ‘Camagu’ music video 157
5.4. Yanga is challenged to a battle 161
5.5. Poster no. 2 in the Butanwear foldout series 169
5.6. Enjoying music with friends 171
6.1. Ill-Literate Skill in Hype magazine 213
7.1. Young pupils attend a breakdancing workshop 227
7.2. Garlic Brown, Lolo and Midus try out new material 229
7.3. MC Jaak rhymes to a park jam crowd 230
7.4. Music video shoot for ‘Streets’ 237
7.5. Ma-b and Dla enjoying a performance by Sole 238
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Setting the scene

‘You’re on the wrong taxi\(^1\) buti\(^2\), the kind women said. ‘Isn’t this going to Gugz?’ I asked, slightly perturbed. She looked surprised, ‘you do know Gugulethu is a black Township, don’t you? Why are you going there?’ The plump elderly lady looked slightly concerned and anxious: it was obvious she was not used to seeing white people in her Township, or even travelling to her Township for that matter. Although I was feeling somewhat apprehensive, having heard some horror stories about the dangers of this neighbourhood, I lied and attempted to make my presence sound inconsequential, ‘yeah, I’ve been lots of times. My friends are meeting me’. As we arrived among the crumbling buildings and hastily erected shacks, I glanced at my watch: it took us only twenty minutes to get to Gugulethu, but it could have been a foreign land.

I was relieved when I saw my chaperone Hyphen standing by the side of the road, waiting for me to appear. I had not yet mastered the tricky three-phase custom handshake that ended with a sharp click, so our greeting was somewhat awkward. It had taken me considerable time to build up the right contacts to discover the places where hip-hop performance could be regularly observed in Cape Town but through networking around the bars and clubs of the city, I heard about a weekly hip-hop ‘parkjam\(^3\)’ that took place every Sunday on the communal basketball courts of this marginalized district.

Hyphen suggested that we begin our adventure by dropping in on a local shebeen\(^4\). We crossed the dusty street, occupied by joyful children playing with a tatty and raggedy football, and walked into what appeared to be just another unremarkable deteriorating building. As well as being an all-night drinking den, this was also

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\(^1\) In South Africa, ‘taxi’ or ‘minibus taxi’ refers to a public form of transport (although privately run) that works like a bus service.

\(^2\) Meaning brother, men in South Africa are often addressed as ‘buti’ whereas women are regularly referred to as ‘sissi’, meaning sister.

\(^3\) A parkjam is an informal gathering where people play music in a public area.

\(^4\) An illicit bar, common in South African Townships.
somebody’s home and as the landlady welcomed us, she released a large rusty padlock fastened around an antique fridge towards the back of her living room. I purchased two quarts of Hanza beer and after we finished them and were feeling adequately refreshed, I suggested that we move onto the parkjam.

We did not have to walk far to arrive at our destination, avoiding the gated entrance and instead climbing through one of the many holes in the meshed fencing, which shredded blue and white plastic bags clung to greedily. As we encroached upon the basketball courts that were littered with broken glass, I began hearing the escalating sound of a thudding bass line. The source was two enormous speakers, propped up in front of an old ice cream van that had been converted into a makeshift DJ booth. The microphone, turntables and rudimentary amplifiers were creatively powered by a group of interlinking extension cords, snaking all the way to an electric outlet in a nearby community centre, some distance away. Through talking to Hyphen, I discovered that the event was organized by a friendly Rastafarian rapper called Korianda who made no money from his coordinating efforts and whose sole motivation appeared to be bringing people together to enjoy the music he loved. The parkjam had been running continuously for more than two years and had become more and more popular among local residents.

It did not take much insight to understand why there were no flyers or posters advertising the event: those outside of Gugulethu would have been unwilling to venture into this territory, and for those inside it was familiar occurrence, providing one of the few forms of organized entertainment in the vicinity. This hip-hop was both literally and figuratively underground, hidden from other Capetonians but also the antithesis of the commercial and mainstream rap music you might encounter on MTV. The performers and performances were unpolished: the rhymes were self-composed, autobiographical and occasionally enacted in isiXhosa, the predominant language of black Capetonians.

I was caught off guard to see that one of the first performers was a young boy, no older than eight. Even though the microphone almost concealed his entire face, he was at ease in front of the crowd and I was pleasantly surprised at how accomplished he was, rhyming on beat, with a fine and sharp delivery. Although he was confident on stage, his age betrayed him once the music stopped and he embarrassedly buried
his head into the chest of his proud father. As the afternoon progressed, the gathering swelled to around a hundred (an average week’s crowd) and more and more MCs took to the stage to exhibit their rapping ability. The performers ranged from the very young to those in their mid-thirties and the spectators were truly representative of the area’s residents: young and old, male and female but exclusively black.

Figure 1.1. People gather to watch the weekly park jam in Gugulethu
As Hyphen and I wandered around, he introduced me to some of his hip-hop acquaintances, all of whom were young, male, Township residents who had decided not to perform that day. Like my experience on the minibus taxi, puzzlement was expressed towards my presence and people were eager for me to explain my attendance. Hyphen half-joked that I must have been the very first white person or foreigner to attend one of these events. My companion emphasised that these were the people I should be talking to, who unlike the amateur performers at the parkjam, were genuine hip-hop heads with a finely crafted skill, more experience and whose life was guided by their love of this musical form. We settled with the cluster as they casually sipped beer, smoked cigarettes and discussed girlfriends, Premier league football, and of most interest to me, their various hip-hop related activities. They spoke about the full range of musical pursuits they had in the pipeline, talking passionately about the songs they wanted to record, the artists they were going to collaborate with and the shows they envisaged staging. They were also open and somewhat ruthless when discussing the value of other MCs, offering their blunt assessments about both the performers at the parkjam and other Cape Town rappers. My new acquaintances were
eager to quiz me about what I made of the local scene, which they spoke of with pride, comparing it favourably to the one found in Johannesburg and others throughout the world. There seemed to be a large degree of camaraderie between these musical performers who intermittently broke into a collective improvised freestyle rap or ‘cipher’, taking turns to rhyme about a plethora of topics, occasionally accompanied by percussion provided by a beatboxer. I listened intently to these lively discussions and freestyles late into the afternoon, until the sun had set and the crowd began to disperse. After being advised that the Township was a far more dangerous place at night, my escort suggested I get a taxi and waited with me until one arrived. I thanked Hyphen for accompanying me to the gig before I began the journey back to my lodgings in central Cape Town.

This thesis is the outcome of over a year spent living, working and socializing with people who had a keen and active interest in hip-hop. The visit to this parkjam provides an insight into many of the challenges I was to encounter in pursuing this ambitious project. Even after more than a decade of democracy and reform, the vast majority of black and coloured Capetonians still reside in segregated Townships on the city’s periphery and Gugulethu was one of the many dispersed neighbourhoods I had to manoeuvre between when interacting with these scattered populations. This physical separation renders much of the city’s hip-hop activities invisible to outsiders and makes practitioners a difficult group to research. Consequently, the identification of suitable research sites relied upon my ability to recruit knowledgeable insiders, like Hyphen, who could orient me towards this hidden and elusive world. When I secured access and began entering these places, my outsider status was written on the skin, making it impossible to remain aloof and blend into the background. I also had to negotiate the ever-present dangers like violence and theft (or most often, violent theft), that are endemic in these environments and which outsiders are especially vulnerable to. As well as being an outsider to Cape Town, I was also, initially at least, an outsider to the world of hip-hop. I neither rapped, breakdanced, span vinyl, spray painted graffiti nor possessed in-depth knowledge and experience of the culture’s many conventions and distinct vernacular. I felt this most acutely that day at the parkjam, when the MCs surrounded me and expected my participation in their

5 Beatboxing is a form of vocal percussion, involving the use of mouth, lips, tongue and voice to produce musical sounds.
improvised raps and informed conversations about a diverse range of hip-hop related topics. As fieldwork progressed, I gradually felt more and more comfortable in these alien surroundings and became more assured in my interactions with the hip-hop heads of Cape Town.

1.2. The hip-hop movement and a note on racial terminology

Hip-hop is a cultural movement that emerged in socially marginalized black and Latino neighbourhoods in New York City in the late 1970s (Chang 2005). The music began when DJs started making ‘beats’ by looping small portions of songs emphasizing a percussion pattern on two turntables and an MC or Master of Ceremonies would rhyme in time with the sound. It consists of four main elements: MCing (often referred to as rapping); DJing or turntablism; graffiti art and breakdancing. More recently, hip-hop expressions have expanded to include more creative arenas including spoken word poetry, theatre, fashion and activism (Chang 2006). In early stages, the culture grew underground, with distribution conducted via bootlegging and marketing by word of mouth (Shusterman 1991). Hip-hop has since progressed over the past twenty years to become one of the most popular musical cultures in the world, and is often cited as evidence for the process of cultural globalization. Someone who participates in or has a devoted interest in at least one of the four elements of hip-hop (MCing, DJing, breakdancing and graffiti) along with a keen appreciation of the musical and cultural heritage is referred to as a ‘hip-hop head’ or simply a ‘head’.

The use of racial terminology in South Africa is a complicated and contested issue and in this thesis, I use the terms black, white and coloured. Although I agree that race is almost entirely a social construct, such terms are necessary because Cape Town citizens use these terms themselves and represent key identities for South Africans. I use the term black to signify people who were classified during apartheid as a ‘native’, ‘black’ or ‘African’. I use coloured to refer to people, mainly from the Western Cape, who are a mixed racial group and who do not fit into any other category easily. Some are descendants of the indigenous Khoi and San who inhabited the region before the arrival of Europeans, others are descended from the slaves,
kidnapped from Indonesia, Malaysia, India and other parts of Africa by the Dutch and more are mixed race. I use white to refer to people who were classified as ‘European’ or ‘white’ during apartheid. While these categories are firmly entrenched, there is nothing homogeneous about these groups. For instance, in South Africa, white people are divided into Afrikaners, English speakers, Greeks, Portuguese, Dutch, Germans and Jews and black people are divided into Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Tsonga, and Venda as well as black immigrants from every African country.

Post apartheid census and employment legislation have continued to use these racial classifications and all of them have remained politically loaded and contested and authors have used these terms in varying ways. For instance, coloured is used as Coloured, ‘coloured’ and so-called coloured (for example, Adhikari 2002 and Battersby 2002). When authors have placed the terms in quotation marks, they signify to the reader their own political stance and convey their belief that the labels are fabricated as mere social constructs (for instance, Jansen 2005, p. 24) and hint that the very use of the terms coloured, black and white lend support to the divisions created by apartheid. Nelson Mandela initially used the vocabulary of apartheid, later however, he altered this and ‘coloured’ was changed to ‘so-called coloured’, before his language evolved to just black and white, in order to emphasize the mutual experiences of discrimination of non-whites during the apartheid era. The main reason I have insisted upon using apartheid era racial terminology of black, white and coloured in this thesis is because respondents referred to themselves and others in these terms.

1.3. Aims and objectives

The principle aim of this thesis is to provide, through empirically grounded ethnographic fieldwork, a sociological account of the Cape Town hip-hop scene, occupied by the heads I encountered at the parkjam and other musical performers of their ilk. Through meeting Hyphen and the others in Gugultethu, it became apparent that their everyday lives and musical activities were so closely entwined that hip-hop was not just something they did, it was something they were and used as a form of collective identity. It is a primary aim of this study to profile the range of practices
that being a member of this scene incorporates as well as exploring the characteristics and range of relationships that constitute it, assessing their varied contribution to hip-hop related endeavours. It is a further purpose to consider how the broader social and cultural environment shapes experiences of this musical form and also to reflect upon the place and role of it within practitioners’ everyday lives and broader social experiences. In so doing the thesis aims to contribute knowledge to the sociological literature on hip-hop scenes outside the United States and also to complement studies in the sociology of music that conceptualize music as an activity embedded in social relations.

The depiction of the parkjam I provided represents just one of many participatory contexts of hip-hop practice. This study endeavours to conduct a wide-ranging, long-term ethnography that traces musicians through these different activities and to explain how they relate to each other. As an example, the casual interactions and informal conversations between the heads I was privy to during the parkjam can be seen detached from their more formal organized musical performances I was to witness later on in fieldwork. However, these two events are inextricably linked and impact upon each other because it is during these interactions that artists develop their individual rapping ability, try out new material and gauge the responses of their peers towards the techniques, style and content of their rhymes which subsequently guides future performance. Through close, informal interaction with musicians and an interrogation of their own context-dependent understandings, the research aims to identify and depict the various social processes at work in shaping this social world.

A further objective is to provide a socially contextualized project that critically observes how the city’s hip-hop scene emerges out of the underlying economic, cultural and social environment. The parkjam experience calls attention to some of the defining characteristics of being young in Cape Town, where Hyphen and his friends live in a precarious present, blighted by high levels of poverty, unemployment and social marginalization. This project attempts to gain an understanding of the various opportunities and constraints this unique social environment, and individuals’ status and group membership within it, has on experiences of hip-hop in the city.
1.4. Research questions and scope of study

In pursuing these aims and objectives, this research asks how social networks and communities form around hip-hop production, how artists produce and disseminate hip-hop cultural artefacts and how valuations are made about them.

The first of these questions engages with how a hip-hop scene emerges out of social interaction and activities. Implicit in this are the practical consequences of the strained relations between racial groups that began in colonialism and apartheid but have remained since the dismantling of these racist political systems. This issue also asks how membership to the two most prominent racial groups in Cape Town (coloured and black) acts to shape relationships around musical practice and how hip-hop reconciles itself with the status quo of the social dynamics of everyday life. It also draws attention to how occasions of collaboration and cooperation are instigated and seeks to uncover the social processes at work in creating boundaries and exclusionary practices around hip-hop community formations.

Many of the musicians in Cape Town face conditions of hardship and my second focus interrogates the individual strategies involved in pursuing hip-hop production and the various opportunities and constraints of social position that determine their ability to do so. Consider the social and economic realities of Township life MC Korianda had to negotiate in putting on this weekly parkjam and consider also how these compromises shaped the setting and organization of the hip-hop performance and practices I described. The lack of facilities in the Township meant that Korianda had to improvise a stage in an unorthodox performance space and secure electricity imaginatively from a nearby community centre. Perhaps realizing that most people would have been unwilling and many incapable of paying any kind of cover charge, access to the event was free and this had a fundamental effect on the environment of performance. What was most striking were the great energies exerted in pursuing hip-hop activity and I was amazed that an event on this scale and regularity could take place in the absence of financial incentive and I became interested in how Korianda drew upon long-term collaborators to borrow essential items like speakers and microphones in the absence of economic capital. These strategies have to be framed within the opportunities and constraints that the wider society offers and by analyzing the struggles and labour that go into artistic production, we can better understand how
these wider economic and cultural structures have a bearing on the nature of the hip-hop scene.

The third question asks how artists make valuations about hip-hop. During the parkjam, I listened intently to the assessments made by Hyphen and his MC associates towards other performers. They were generally positive and they all seemed to be proud and keen to tell me that I was witnessing real hip-hop enacted by skilled wordsmiths. This experience along with subsequent conversations with musicians led me to realize that hip-hop valuations centred on the notion of authenticity and I became attentive to how these evaluations were made. I became interested in how the immediate environment of performance, a black Xhosa Township on the outskirts of Cape Town, affected processes of valuation and how performers themselves were influenced by these standards and also how these distinctions were policed. In this, I was seeking to address musicians’ social constructions of what good hip-hop was and investigate the various contradictions in reconciling these understandings with the pursuit of financial gain. It was found that valuations of ‘good’ or ‘real’ hip-hop in Cape Town are to a large extent, socially constructed, context dependent and negotiated by a range of actors. Performance is fundamental to these constructions and determined by who evaluates them, the desired outcome and the types of capital available to an actor. Overall, the competition and allegiances among artists in the city produces a dynamic and contradictory realm of debate about what authentic hip-hop is.

The fieldwork revealed that social relations in Cape Town hip-hop are largely guided by race and that most practitioners were stratified into either a black or coloured camp. Processes of socialization, identity formation and cooperation work to create these groups and the processes of differentiation, inequality and discrimination create boundaries around them that work to exclude others. Hip-hop knowledge and guidance is transmitted within these groupings and the resources that artists draw upon are firmly rooted within them. While there have been various attempts to reconcile this fragmentation, both with this explicit aim and as a consequence of other interests, they have had varying degrees of success. However, due to advancements and proliferation of transport and communication technologies, hip-hop networks are becoming less rooted to place and ethnicity, and I will show how.
Hard work and insecurities characterize artists’ hip-hop creative labour but there is an amazing passion to continue. This is partially explained by the sociability and camaraderie it brings as well as an absence of alternatives in a society characterized by high unemployment and low income. Even though confronted by unfavourable economic circumstances, hip-hop heads utilize their social and cultural capital in pursuit of creative activities. Community membership largely frames artists’ entrepreneurial activities or ‘hustles’ as they most commonly determine the types of social and physical capital people can draw upon. In the pursuit of music making, performance, distribution and promotion, these ‘hustles’ largely take place within the informal economy and incorporate a wide range of highly valued activities.

1.5. Rationale

A strong motivation for choosing hip-hop as the focal point for this ethnography is that it attracts people from a broad range of socio-cultural backgrounds (Kitwana 2005), thereby allowing the comparison of outcomes between different groups who practice it. This inclusiveness is partially explained by hip-hop’s distinctiveness from other musical cultures in requiring neither formal training (e.g. learning to read or write music) nor expensive instruments (like guitars, drum kits and keyboards) but also because it has an umbrella appeal to those who experience any form of social or political marginalization (Osumare 2007). Despite this across-the-board appeal, there has been a limited supply of comparative research on how different groups appropriate and interact with the culture. Although Elphein (1998) has provided a comparison on hip-hop found in two areas of Germany and Fenn & Perullo (2000) have compared the language choice of Tanzanian and Malawian MCs, there has been a dearth of work into the experiences of different groups inhabiting the same geographic area.

As an approximate research area, Cape Town provides a uniquely suitable urban environment to study this, because despite the monumental changes that have occurred since the dismantling of apartheid, such as the removal of mobility restrictions and the implementation of a representative and democratic government, stark inequalities and cultural differences persist and neighbourhoods remain rigidly
segregated, with Bestaman recently describing the metropolis as ‘the least integrated city in South Africa’ (2008, p.12). The population is also more balanced compared to other South African cities and is exceptional in the majority of the residents not being black. This makes racial separation more visibly pronounced and provides a research site where broader social divisions can be more easily scrutinized.

Due to the tremendous commercialization hip-hop has undergone over the past two decades, most academic accounts interpret and convey a narrow and mainstream version of the culture, thereby denying a fair and balanced representation of it. According to Petchauer, this has led to a misrepresentation in popular and academic discourses surrounding this important musical form.

Much confusion…has surrounded hip-hop. This has been the case because there is little translation between the (mis)representations in the commercial media and the grounded expressions that are created in local spaces (2009, p. 947).

Despite being the first place in South Africa to appropriate hip-hop and being home to a rich and vibrant scene, because the musical and media industries are located in Johannesburg, Cape Town represents a non-profit driven cultural space with few moneymaking opportunities available to local artists. Ethnographic fieldwork directed towards an underground scene in this non-commercial area allows for more ‘grounded expressions’ to be interpreted and can work to redress the imbalance of hip-hop scholarship.

By being producer-led, this research seeks to complement other work on hip-hop outside the United States, which has overwhelmingly focussed on the consumption patterns of enthusiasts (e.g. Condry 2001a; Mattar 2003; Weiss 2002). When authors have looked at artistic production, their analysis has tended to treat cultural artefacts as established objects, by either providing a textual analysis of lyrics (e.g. Androutsopoulos and Scholz 2003) or an appraisal of the language, stylistic and aesthetic features used by artists (e.g. Fenn and Perullo 2000; Elfein 1998; Fernandes 2003). These examinations have therefore been detached from the actual process of cultural production and my work adopts an alternative and neglected approach, focusing on the social world of performers and the way hip-hop cultural objects, like songs and music videos, emerge out of social relations in a specified geographical setting. The focus on performers has meant that this study has an ingrained gender
imbalance, as the overwhelming majority of hip-hop performers in Cape Town are male. As a musical genre generally, hip-hop has pronounced associations to masculinity (Rose 1994, p. 146-82) and the wider prevalence of traditional gender roles and sexual power imbalances in South African society mean that these facets of the musical culture carry over to the Cape Town scene.

A further reason to look specifically at performers, as opposed to consumers, is because this group are more likely to be true devotees of hip-hop and have a more meaningful relationship to the culture and the people who surround it. Compared to studies on other musical cultures, a monopoly of consumer-led research is a more pronounced weakness in the field of hip-hop because it is a culture that actively encourages participation in a wide range of practices (incorporating rapping, DJing, breakdancing and graffiti writing) and has lower barriers to entry. In order to accurately depict hip-hop in Cape Town, the focus of this study is skewed towards rapping because this was by far the most popular element, but graffiti writing and DJing is also incorporated into the analysis where relevant.

There has also been an absence of long-term ethnographic engagement in hip-hop scholarship and the choice of participant observation as the main methodological approach of this study was partially made to compensate for this omission. Ian Condry’s work stands out in this regard (2000 and 2001a) with data deriving from his own PhD fieldwork, and the wider neglect can partially be explained by most research not having the benefit of extended presence in the field that doctoral work affords. Unfortunately, Condry’s research follows the trend of other literature in the field and forsakes an interrogation of production by the author instead choosing to focus on the spaces of mediation among Japanese consumers.

As previously mentioned, too often, academic writing on hip-hop has been written by people far removed from the culture and relied on secondary sources, usually provided by mass media depictions and textual analysis of established artists. Moving on from an examination of text and style and instead providing rich qualitative data centred on the lives of performers and an analysis of hip-hop as a set of practices and processes enables insights about how the work and leisure involved in a scene are shaped by the local social, cultural and economic conditions of the region. Ethnography holds an advantage over other methods in a study focused on the lives of
artists because of its commitment to intimate and prolonged contact, allowing the researcher to gain a better appreciation of respondents’ own cultural understandings of their artistic practices.

This research adopts a social interactionist approach, attempting to describe interactions between social actors largely though examining subjective processes. Ethnography is a favourable methodology to use in this regard because it facilitates the collection of data that incorporates the understanding that human action is meaningful to people and that they act upon the meaning they ascribe to their actions and the actions of others. Participant observation distinguishes itself from other methods in that it allows the researcher to observe nonverbal expressions of feelings, determine who interacts with whom and grasp how participants communicate with each other (Schmuck 1997). It also positions the researcher within the field so they get a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

This approach to studying hip-hop works to fill a deficit within hip-hop scholarship, which has largely neglected sociocultural perspectives (Petchauer 2009, p. 966). There have also not been any studies that explicitly seek to identify the social processes at work that shape a localized hip-hop scene. Social interactionism has been adopted here because it facilitates an account of how social interaction between people can create meaningful social experiences and the ways in which these experiences can, in turn, manifest in social action.

While a selection of academics have written explicitly about the Cape Town hip-hop scene, these have generally relied on secondary sources (typically song lyrics) and have revolved around the activities of a handful of relatively successful coloured artists (Badsha 2003; Battersby 2003; Haupt 2001 and Watkins 2001) and therefore were not representative of the overall scene as I have depicted it. My work departs from these by covering a broader spectrum of performers at varying stages of their careers and also contributes more broadly to the understanding of the lives of young people in post-apartheid Cape Town.

The main empirical themes of ‘community’, ‘hustling’ and ‘authenticity’ have been selected in this study both because they are uniquely relevant within hip-hop culture and for their ability to provide insights into the social processes shaping the lives and
experiences of practitioners. The theme of ‘community’ has not been widely tackled by hip-hop scholars, which is surprising as journalistic work in this field often discuss the various factions and allegiances between mainstream artists (e.g. Broomfield 2002) and the ubiquitous presence of place-bound references and allusions in hip-hop lyrics where authenticity usually involves an articulation of local contexts and ‘horizons of significance’ (Taylor 1992, p. 39). The concept of community can also help explain how a social world is organized through social relations and can be used to highlight the key social processes of differentiation, discrimination and boundary creation that construct and sustain the hip-hop community in Cape Town.

In this thesis, the expression ‘hustle’ is used to describe artists’ entrepreneurial activities, largely enacted within the informal economy that facilitates their cultural production. Like ‘community’, entrepreneurship is a recurrent subject matter within hip-hop discourses with the expressive style of hustlers being prominent in music videos and in the public personas of many artists (Dyson 2007; Kitwana 2005, p. 136; Pough 2004). Crossley has also noted that the ‘underground economy, often finds itself metaphorized [sic] in rap music’ (2005, p. 506). The origin of the concept’s importance derives from its connection to the marginal and unemployed status of early African-American practitioners where the underground economy appeared to be the quickest and most reliable source of income (Kitwana 2005, p. 40-46). This well-defined history and legacy will resonate more deeply with performers from Cape Town, where poverty and unemployment are also high and where the ‘hustle’ is a practical response to disadvantage.

Like community and hustling, ‘authenticity’ (in common parlance expressed as ‘real’), is an ever-present theme in hip-hop. Over time, it has developed to become the main symbolic source of meaning and value in the culture, where to be considered real is ‘a compliment of the highest order’ (Boyd 2002, p. 111) and notable scholars like Rose (1994) Smith (1997) and Krims (2000) have also shown that performances of authenticity are necessary in establishing the credibility of any hip-hop artist. Exploring authenticity as a topic also facilitates an interrogation of the cultural politics of production and the range of practices and interests involved in the negotiation of artistic performance.
1.6. Thesis overview

Following this introduction, chapter 2, the literature review, sets out the sociological context of the research. It begins with a consideration of the position of this thesis within previous scholarly work in the sociology of music, sociology of race and hip-hop studies. The ethnographic chapters in this thesis are not linked by a unified conceptual approach but rather draw from numerous theoretical advances and the first section of this chapter draws upon writings on musicians’ livelihoods, the informal economy, social capital and trust to shed theoretical light on the ways respondents conducted their entrepreneurial activities or ‘hustles’. The next section discusses the concept of community and online and virtual communities in order to provide a theoretical context to the way the hip-hop scene in Cape Town is socially organized. The final section draws on the production of culture perspective and approaches to authenticity in artistic production to provide an account of the process where Cape Town artists socially construct standards of hip-hop.

Chapter 3 provides a background to the social context in which the hip-hop heads in this study are situated. While Cape Town as the site of ethnography is the main focus of these pages, relevant parts of the history of the country are detailed. Arrays of legacies from the apartheid era persist with a continuation of the problematic relationships between different races, remaining socio-economic stratification and geographic division of previous eras manifesting themselves in contemporary reality. The first section outlines this inheritance specifically, detailing the separation between racial groups, which I argue is fundamental in understanding any aspect of social life within the city. The chapter continues by describing the defining characteristics of my research sample and their place in broader South African society and is further divided into the experiences of living in a Township, being young and an outline of some of the complexities surrounding the issue of gender in this environment. The final section deals more specifically with how the city frames hip-hop experiences and incorporates discussions on the musical and cultural industries, the history of the hip-hop movement in Cape Town and modes of communication.

Chapter 4 details the methodological issues that arose from collecting data during fieldwork. Issues around access and immersion in the field are initially discussed and this is followed by a reflection on the various practical and ethical challenges I
confronted in carrying out this research. I also consider the type of data my choice of method facilitated and the final section looks at the epistemological and philosophical nature of ethnography as it relates to my own study.

Chapter 5 analyses the Cape Town hip-hop community. To a large extent, hip-hop heads have a collective identity and share a sense of solidarity, cooperation and collaboration but, these positive aspects are overshadowed by the division, largely along race lines that creates a deeply fragmented scene. The various attempts to reconcile these groups and their varying degrees of success will be outlined and also the impact of communication and transport technologies in extending these community formations.

Chapter 6 frames the act of ‘hustling’ as entrepreneurial activities that work to further hip-hop production and begins by considering how artists secure key resources crucial to their hip-hop activity. This chapter also provides a portrait of the social world of the hustler, underlining how this activity is valued locally, and how it is influenced by race. I continue by separating the various hustles executed for the specific facets of hip-hop entrepreneurship of music-making, performance, distribution, publicity and promotion. The chapter concludes by illustrating the various outcomes available to those who chose to hustle for hip-hop in Cape Town.

Chapter 7 concerns the manufacture and negotiation of understandings of authenticity amongst Cape Town hip-hop practitioners. It begins by outlining the importance of authenticity and the various methods hip-hop heads use in order to evoke it as a mode of distinction (Bourdieu 1984). This chapter continues by analyzing the process where hip-hop heads negotiate their performances of authenticity in terms of the tools available to them and the audience they want appeal to. I conclude by describing how a sense of authenticity among artists can be challenged and maintained.

The final chapter of this thesis reflects upon the research carried out in fulfilment of this thesis by discussing the nature of hip-hop culture and its appropriation in Cape Town. The various methodological approaches, challenges and constraints are assessed and the extent to which the project’s aims were accomplished will also be determined. Finally, I will discuss the contribution this study has made as well as outlining future research possibilities.
**Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### 2.1. Introduction: music and sociology

Sociology has long offered a disciplinary vantage point to understand music, evidenced by the seminal contributions of distinguished scholars like Max Weber (1958); W.E.B. Du Bois (1997 [1903]); Alfred Schultz (1951); T. W. Adorno (2002) and Howard Becker (1982). However ‘after a century of studies, there is no agreement on what it means to construct a sociology of music’ (Hennion 2003, p. 80) and the field remains ‘rather inchoate’ (Martin 1995, p. vii). This is despite the undoubted value of works that have surveyed the development of this specialized discipline (e.g. Dowd 2007). In order to get a handle and make use of the plethora of vantage points, this section adopts the object/activity dichotomy of understanding music employed by Bohlman (1999) and explores the three most salient topics within it with regards to this project. These are identified as the use of music for identity construction, music as a form of collective activity and music as a mode of distinction. I continue by providing a justification for the choice of substantive themes considered in each of the empirical chapters and provide an outline for the rest of this chapter.

In order to locate this study within the sociology of music subfield, I employ the dichotomy evoked by Bohlman (1999), that music can either be conceptualized as an object or activity. Conceived as an object, music is understood as a written and recorded text that can be possessed, circulated and inspected. This textual approach treats music as synonymous to language with sociologists often performing an interpretation of lyrics. As an example and with reference to hip-hop music, Kubin analysed 400 songs from best-selling albums and summarises that the lyrics help ‘construct an interpretive environment where violence is appropriated as acceptable’ (2005, p. 366). This approach has been broadened to incorporate analysing the structure of the music itself (DeNora 1986) in a variety of musical genres including national anthems (Cerulo 1995) and heavy metal (Walser 1999).
This thesis is firmly rooted in the alternative camp, focusing on music as an activity. Approaching music as a text can make the mistake of treating it as isolated from social life (Bohlman 1999) and this project is instead interested in exploring how it is embedded in social relations. DeNora argues that scholars who focus on music as text ‘often conflate ideas about music’s effect with the ways that music actually works for and is used by its recipients instead of exploring how such links are forged by situated actors’ (2000, p. 22). In this line of thought, Small uses the phrase ‘musicking’ to illustrate how the activity of music is embodied both in the performance but also in the efforts that enables it.

The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds…but also between the people taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance… (1998, p. 13).

While Small (1998) focuses on actors associated with music performance, Becker’s (1982) art world approach incorporates a broader range of individuals who contribute to the creation and dissemination of music. Both these understandings conceptualize music as an on-going activity and afford social interaction in the process a central role. This way of approaching music heeds Feld’s call that academics go beyond ‘readings’ of music and analyse ‘the primacy of symbolic action in an ongoing intersubjective lifeworld, and the ways engagement in symbolic action continually shapes actors’ perceptions and meanings’ (1984, p. 383). From this contextualized standpoint, the most noteworthy contributions within the sociology of music, vis-à-vis my project are: how music is used to construct identity, how it can be understood as a collective activity and also as a mode of distinction.

The first topic to be considered within the sociology of music is music’s relationship to identity. This theme has been taken up by authors studying a broad range of genres including but not restricted to punk (Bennett 2006); opera (Benzecry 2009); dance (Thornton 1996) and bluegrass (Gardener 2004). In this, music has been shown to both indicate and help constitute the identity of individuals and groups (Bennett 2006). With regard to individual identity, DeNora’s (2000) influential study found that people construct an identity by deploying music in a deliberate meaning-making process by using it to document important aspects of their lives. My research departs
An embrace of hip-hop music is a fundamental component of being a member of the black and coloured hip-hop communities in Cape Town and it is used as a signifier of group identification for members and non-members alike. In this way it works as a boundary device, causing those who share similar tastes to gravitate towards each other and excluding those who do not. In his ethnography of Chicago Blues music, Grazian (2004) has shown how people can come together through music in a geographical area. Others have shown how this process can also occur across physical locales (Román Velázquez 1999; Kahn-Harris 2007) and virtual spaces (Beer 2008). As a boundary device musical identification proves divisive when people define themselves against others (Bourdieu 1984). Du Bois (1997 [1903]) made the point that the role of music in defining a community is especially acute when used to express their plight and in-groupness, illustrated by the way African-American slaves used religious lyrics to define themselves and articulate their plight and also the way hip-hop is often used to articulate immediate social and political concerns.

The second area within the sociology of music with direct relevance to this study is the understanding of music as a collective activity. Musical composition is often regarded as a solo pursuit but the art worlds approach (Becker 1982) and the production of culture perspective (Peterson and Anand 2004) demonstrate that even if a solo artist writes and records music on their own, their musical creation is deeply social and contingent on others. These perspectives provide a useful way to think about the many influences that surround the process of music making. My analysis makes most use of the production of culture perspective and this theoretical outlook is interrogated further in the final section of this chapter.

The process of musical socialization, advanced by Fabbri in his work on ‘genre’ (1982 and 1989) is a further way music can be conceived of as a collective activity. The author defines ‘genre’ as the socially accepted rules addressing the technical, behavioural and ideological aspects of music that work as accepted rules that new practitioners need to learn and adopt. Understandings of a genre serve as a powerful tool of socialization, particularly when transferred by mentors, the media and peers (Bayton 1998 and Clawson 1999). Chapter 7 approaches the topic by setting out the
process where people become recognized as heads and begin to comprehend accepted understandings of authenticity within the genre of hip-hop. Other sociologists have extended the concept by outlining how accepted rules can change over time (Lena and Peterson 2008; Santoro 2002) and this helps explain how hip-hop in Cape Town is understood to have progressed through at least two generations and the way understandings of authenticity are continuously negotiated. A selection of authors have further shown that when individuals align themselves to a genre it connects them to others in a field that spans the local (Crossley 2008), the virtual (Beer 2008) and the imagined (Lena 2004). These interconnections are discussed in chapter 5 where the development and democratization of mobile and Internet communication are shown to have increased the links between hip-hop heads globally.

The final topic within the sociology of music to be considered here is music as a form of social distinction. Moving on from earlier writers like Max Weber (1958) who sought to make links between music and entire societies, Bourdieu made a connection between the music a person enjoys and their position in society, asserting strongly that: ‘Nothing more clearly affirms one’s “class”, nothing more infallibly classifies, than taste in music’ (1984, p. 18). In arguing that the economic capital available to each class determines their musical preference, Bourdieu draws upon the French class system to make a case that the working class favour music that does not require training to appreciate and the upper class, by virtue of having more leisure time and greater resources, prefer music that requires education and cultivation to enjoy. Consequently, by virtue of class position, the upper classes’ musical preference becomes ‘legitimate’ and serves as cultural capital that provides avenues for opportunity and success.

Complementing the perspective that music closely aligns to status, Martin (1995) and DeNora (2002) demonstrate that listeners gravitate towards music they see as representing their social location (Martin 1995; DeNora 2002). Devalued musical genres have also been shown to regularly become associated with devalued people (Lamont and Molnár 2002) and these connections are made by a broad range of actors, including record companies, critics, employers and listeners (Roy and Dowd 2010).
Others have argued that conceptual distinctions do not neatly fit into particular social distinctions in the way Bourdieu describes (Coulangeon and Lemel 2007; García-Álvarez et al 2007), and Roy (2002 and 2004) shows that as well as reinforcing social distinctions, musical tastes can reach across them. For instance, music produced by black people has often been devalued (Frith 1996), but by virtue of it often being regarded as more authentic than white music, associations with class can become inverted (Cantwell 1997; Grazian 2004). In his ethnography of hip-hop, Rodríguez observes:

Whites who pick up on African American styles and music do not necessarily want to be black; they seek to acquire the characteristics of blackness associated with being cool (2006, p. 649).

The concept of distinction as Bourdieu sets out is further complicated by the ‘omnivorous’ tastes of high status individuals who enjoy a wide range of musical genres (García-Álvarez et al 2007). In common with these critiques, my work illustrates that hip-hop is enjoyed and practiced by a variety of status groups. Chapter 7 illustrates however that members of different classes, which in Cape Town roughly map onto racial classifications, by appealing to different understandings of authenticity found within hip-hop, show distinction within a genre.

This research attempts to document and interpret the way hip-hop as a social and cultural practice is mediated in Cape Town through an examination of local hip-hop community formations, the entrepreneurial activities of practitioners and an evaluation of the ways authenticity is constructed. Hip-hop is manifestly at the heart of this thesis but while there has been a growing body of hip-hop scholarship, with few exceptions, they have not approached the topic with sociological precision. So rather than engaging solely in a review of hip-hop specific literature, this chapter more constructively concerns itself with three broad areas of sociological work that have framed the interpretation of observations during fieldwork. These topics are: musician’s livelihoods, community and manufacturing authenticity.

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6 Record companies have played a key role in this blurring of distinctions, realizing the benefits of artists achieving ‘crossover success’ (Dowd 2004 and Peterson 1997).
7 Critics and academics have played a big part in showing that music associated to African-Americans is worthy of merit and contemplation (Lopes 2002; Lena and Peterson 2008).
The first part of this chapter sets out the foundations of hip-hop scholarship by providing an overview of the most significant themes and developments that have arisen from this specialist literature. In particular, I focus on both the empirical and theoretical contributions that best foreground my own research. Following this, I provide an overview of work that has interrogated hip-hop scenes outside the United States, drawing out their contribution in understanding the one I encountered in Cape Town. The following section explores the sociology of race and ethnicity in order to make my own position clear on how I understand terms of reference such as ‘race’ in the South African context.

In the third part to this chapter, I illustrate the significant factors that contribute to the entrepreneurial working lives of hip-hop practitioners in Cape Town. In this I highlight the sociological literature that has aided the understanding of employment within the creative sector and how work in this field distinguishes itself from other, more orthodox professions. In pursuing a variety of hip-hop work and in response to a combination of the uncommercialized nature of the local scene and the absence of economic capital among practitioners, respondents largely toiled within the informal economy, making full use of their endowment of social capital. All these issues are discussed with reference to the pertinent social science literature.

The forth part to this chapter explores how the concept of community can be utilized to help explain the social organization of hip-hop heads in Cape Town. In particular, I highlight how the concept can be used to explain some of the processes of inclusion and exclusion found within the local scene. The increasing importance of the Internet for social relationships is also examined, with specific reference to its utility in establishing new contacts and strengthening existing ones.

In the final substantive section of this chapter, I explore the theme of authenticity within hip-hop culture and set out the process where it is claimed, validated and negotiated among local artists and other agents as a boundary device. In this, I argue that authenticity is a malleable quality that is performed in a range of contexts. Here I also engage with the production of culture perspective (Peterson and Anand 2004) to illustrate how symbolic elements of culture are shaped by systems in which they are created, distributed, taught and preserved.
2.2. Hip-hop scholarship

There is an emerging field of literature concerned exclusively with hip-hop that some have termed ‘hip-hop studies’ (e.g. Forman and Neal 2004). Trica Rose’s (1994) seminal book *Black Noise* is regarded as the touchstone text, providing a socio-historical analysis of the contexts in which hip-hop emerged and this was the centrepiece of a small wave of research published in the 1990s (see Kitwana 1994; Perkins 1996; Potter 1995; Sexton 1995). In this genre, authors have shown a strong tendency to act as cultural critics by either criticizing the culture as nihilistic and destructive (e.g. Kilson 2003; McWhorter 2003) or celebrating it as prophetic, empowering and full of educational potential (e.g. Boyd 2002; Ginwright 2004). The most prominent hip-hop authors based on book sales and influence are Trica Rose (1994), Robin D. G. Kelley (1997) and Murray Foreman and Mark Anthony Neal (2004) who all give attention to the political side of rap, approaching hip-hop lyrics as a form of oppositional politics or ‘infrapolitics’ (Scott 1990).

As a topic of study, it is difficult to provide an exhaustive review of hip-hop scholarship because it exists across a range of academic disciplines. These include philosophy (Darby and Shelby 2005); sociology (Rose 1994); psychology (Brown 2006); communications (Dimitriadis 2001); higher education (Petchauer 2007); Black studies (Smitherman 1997); cultural studies (McLaren 1997); women’s studies (Pough 2004); spirituality (Pinn 2003); ethnomusicology (Krims 2000); cultural literacy (Morrell 2004); curriculum studies (Ibrahim 2004) and sociolinguistics (Alim 2004). A review is made even more challenging by the lines between academic and non-academic literature being blurred. This is the outcome of many academically trained scholars producing journalistic texts (e.g. Chang 2005 and 2006) and writers like Bakari Kitwana (2005), who started off as a journalist and went onto publish work within the academy.

In exploring this emerging, interdisciplinary body of work I separate **textual**, social commentary and grounded approaches. The most widespread approach in the study of hip-hop has been textual, typically focusing on lyrics, magazine articles and music videos. Much of the work in this area has come from academics operating within cultural studies (e.g. Giroux 1994) where texts are used to provide an interpretation of social identities, oppositional practices, hegemonic and counter hegemonic structures
There has also been a focus on the music’s impact on audiences in reference to sex and sexuality, racial attitudes, substance abuse and violence (e.g. Dixon and Brooks 2002; Ballard and Coates 1995). This body of literature has worked to establish hip-hop as a legitimate area of study but has failed to provide any accounts of the ways that hip-hop functions in the lives of people who create it in local contexts. My work avoids this omission by bringing together a focus on hip-hop artefacts and the processes and contexts they are produced within.

At the same time as textual approaches emerged from academic scholars, a range of writing from journalists and other non-fiction writers sought to provide a social commentary on hip-hop (George 1998; Kitwana 2005; Chang 2005 and 2006). These works typically provided an account of the culture’s emergence and spread, often built upon by the author having an insider status and an established hip-hop background. Overall, these have provided important insights into the culture but by not applying the same academic rigour of more scholarly works, these accounts suffer. This is because their validity cannot be tested and it is difficult to relate findings to other areas of research as they fail to provide any explanatory accounts and methodological techniques are not adequately described.

Grounded literature provides a further strand found in hip-hop studies. Moving on from studying the contents of songs, grounded approaches adopt the perspective that hip-hop texts ‘contain no essential or inherent meaning but are always given meaning by people, in particular times and in particular places’ (Dimitriadis 2001, p. 11). Of most relevance to my work is the research that has shown the ways that knowledge of hip-hop can provide young people with cultural capital (Clay 2003; Dimitriadis 2001) and those studies that have illustrated the appeal of hip-hop across ethnic and racial groups (Iwamoto et al 2007; Dimitriadis 2001). These works have typically adopted an ethnographic approach and also have in common with my project an interest in how young people use hip-hop in local contexts as well as a focus on social and cultural practices. However, this literature concentrates on processes affecting fans and consumption patterns rather than musicians and artistic production.

A selection of these grounded approaches have looked at hip-hop outside the United States. The key debates in this subfield are how hip-hop is used to construct identity and how processes of localization adapt hip-hop to suit a new environment. Although
my study is also about a non-American hip-hop scene, the debates found in this literature have only partial relevance to it. In terms of identity construction, Condry (2001b) finds that youths use hip-hop and African-American identity as a way to distance themselves from what they see as a homogenous and conservative Asian culture. Similarly, Fenn and Perullo (2000) describe how Malawi youths use the terms and idioms of hip-hop in order to differentiate themselves from wider national culture. Elfein’s (1998) work departs from this, showing how Turkish-German youth embrace hip-hop not to distance themselves from their pre-existing social identity, but as a way to embrace it.

The overwhelming majority of sociological work on non-American hip-hop has emphasised the process of localization or glocalization, highlighting the blend of global and local influences that infuse various scenes throughout the world. Some authors have illustrated how aesthetics are adapted in order to suit national cultures and localized conditions. For instance, Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2003) in describing the album covers, observe that while the artists use some symbolism which is found in mainstream US hip-hop like wearing baseball caps backwards and using graffiti-style lettering, they also display distinct Italian identity markers by sitting around a table eating spaghetti. A similar point is made by Maxwell (1997) in his discussion of Australian hip-hop, where he argues that there is interplay between the artist and consumer in selecting what is most attractive to the audience. Further research has concentrated on how the messages within hip-hop lyrics are tailored to articulate specifically local social issues and political concerns (Chesseman 1998; Mitchell 1995; Perullo 2005). Instead of analysing the way that cultural artefacts are localized like these other studies, my work, looking at community and environments of production and using the ‘production of culture’ perspective (Peterson and Anand 2004) show how the overall scene and artefacts are tailored in an unconscious way by a range of actors and the structure of the local industry.

2.3. Understanding race and ethnicity in South Africa

The concept of race is rooted to the archaic assumption that human beings can be biologically classified according to physical differences. Although this hypothesis has
long been discredited, the idea of race is still a defining factor in how human society organizes itself. Diverging from race, ethnicity defines individuals who consider themselves, or considered by others, to share certain characteristics on the basis of common historical origin, close-knit patterns of social interaction and a sense of common identity. Few topics in sociology are as complex or create as much controversy and heated debate as race and ethnicity, presenting ‘difficulties for any attempt at theoretical overview and synthesis’ (Winant 2000, p. 169). Therefore, out of pragmatism and necessity, I will focus on the theoretical contributions made by Michael Banton, John Rex, Robert Miles, John Solomos and Paul Gilroy while setting out my understanding of race and ethnicity in the context of South Africa and more specifically, the research parameters of this study.

Questions of race and ethnicity have long provided fertile soil for the sociological imagination, and overtime, theoretical perspectives have tended to reflect the author’s broader social and political environment. Just as early 20th century figures like W.E.B. Du Bois began to challenge the racist assumptions of previous times and thinkers, as immigration from the Commonwealth grew, scholars in the UK became more focused on the migrant experience, working to identify the extent that non-British people could be successfully assimilated into British culture. Influenced by Robert E. Park’s ‘cycle of race relations’, Michael Banton, John Rex, Sheila Patterson and others used the established framework of a host, receiving community and a new immigrant population to establish ‘race relations’ as a new and distinct field of social enquiry.

Park’s ‘cycle of race relations’, perceived the interaction between the majority and minority groups moving from an initial phase of contact, through to conflict and then to accommodation before the minority group is finally assimilated into the dominant culture. According to this functionalist theory, any prejudice and discrimination a group encounters is a temporary phenomenon occurring in a difficult period of adjustment. In this understanding, the onus is on minorities to abandon their lifestyles and values and adopt those of the host society.

The use of terms such as ‘migrant’ and ‘minority group’ by thinkers working within race relations raises the question of whether they can be transferred and applied to the specific and unusual racial issues of South Africa (a background of which is provided in the chapter that follows). In contrast to the British experience, racism against black
people in South Africa was not an attack on the minority population but rather an attack on the majority. Similarly, black people do not represent a migrant population but rather a native one. However, complicated by apartheid legislation, the situation is not straightforward. Although in the early part of the 20th century, people of different races lived in Cape Town, as the white minority tightened their grip, they forcibly removed black people from metropolitan areas and moved them to ‘native homelands’ where they were denied South African citizenship. As the decades wore on, more and more black males were allowed in Cape Town to provide cheap labour for the city’s industries and since democracy has flourished, many more have moved to the city. To some extent at least then, it is possible to utilize the paradigm of a ‘receiving’ and ‘host’ community to the geographical area I studied.

Both Banton and Rex have made notable and important contributions within the race-relations perspective. Although as a starting point both assert against using race as a scientific category, the scholars diverge significantly in the importance they attribute to political and historical factors. While Rex accords a great deal of significance to these dynamics in determining contemporary race-relations, explicitly stating that, ‘in the pattern of human history that is being woven for our future, the overriding theme seems to be that of race war’ (1970, p. 35), Banton’s position and analysis centres on the individual. For instance, the author applied rational-choice theory to analyse individual decision-making processes, stating:

1. Individuals use physical and cultural differences to create groups and categories by the processes of inclusion and exclusion. Ethnic groups result from the inclusive processes and racial groups from exclusive processes.

2. When groups interact, processes of change affect their boundaries in ways determined by the form and intensity of competition. In particular, when people compete with individuals, this tends to dissolve boundaries that define the groups; when they compete as groups, this reinforces those boundaries (Banton 1983, p. 100-139).

The application of rational-choice theory allowed Banton to investigate how buyers and sellers in the housing market are influenced by preferences, including ones based on skin colour. In pursuing this line of enquiry, he was able to show that people from visible minority groups often have to pay a ‘colour tax’ when entering the housing market (Banton 1979). I found this approach useful in looking at the choices and
interactions among different racial groups in Cape Town and this area is pursued more fully in chapter 5.

Although these have been notable contributions, Solomos argues that up to the 1980s there was no clear theoretical perspective really regarding what was the object of the analysis of these studies, and that there was an absence of a ‘wider socio-political perspective on the intersection of race relations and other kinds of social relations’ (Solomos 2003, p. 18). This body of work can similarly be critiqued for not looking at issues of politics and power. Subsequently, sociological and neo-Marxist writings on racism became the first to interrogate the issue of power and political structures in debates on race (Gilroy 1987) and Marxist-influenced scholars, like Robert Miles and John Solomos, began to challenge the ‘race-relations’ paradigm. The new perspective these authors offered, moved away from inter-group dynamics and the role of race in postcolonial societies, and instead raised important theoretical issues surrounding the link between class and race, which previous work failed to do.

In Race and Migrant Labour, published in 1982, Miles attacked Rex and Banton’s employment in their work of ‘race’ as an analytical category, suggesting that the subfield entitled, ‘sociology of race relations’ both reinforced and gave credibility to the outdated and scientifically disproved proposition that ‘race’ could be thought of as a biological and cultural category. The author writes:

‘If social scientists retain the idea of ‘race’ as an analytical concept to refer to the social reproduction and consequences of this belief, it necessarily implicitly carries the meaning of its use in the everyday world (Miles 1993, p. 2-3).

By abandoning ‘race’, Miles believed a better understanding of the experiences of migrants could be gained. The author sought to separate analytically the processes of racialization and racism by describing both the ideological processes where groups come to be thought of as ‘races’ and ‘the ideological content of the identified process’ (Miles 1994, p. 275). For Miles, the focus of the study should no longer be race-relations but, ‘the study of the determination and effects of different modalities of racism within the historical matrix mapped out by the evolution of the capitalist mode of production and the associated rise of the nation state’ (1993, p. 21). According to Miles, racism is ‘an ideology which signifies some real or alleged biological characteristic as a criterion of other group membership and which also attributes that
group with other, negatively evaluated characteristics’ (1993, p. 60). Anthias has criticized this perspective, arguing that it is ‘a very limited and virtually useless definition for identifying racism in contemporary societies, particularly given the growth of culturalist forms of racism that do not specify biological inferiority but rely on cultural difference and notions of undesirability’ (1995, p. 288). This critique is important to the South African experience because the ideology of separate development instigated during apartheid was based on the proposition that culturally, black populations were not capable of living in advanced capitalist societies.

Attempting to move away from treating race as if it was a real phenomenon, Miles sought to analyse the underlying economic structures that make it ‘real’ in the minds of people, suggesting that ideas reflect the material conditions of society and that the ruling ideas of society are the ideas of the ruling class. For Miles therefore, race is nothing but an illusion, allowing people to be categorized in such terms and obscuring the true cause of exploitation. While Miles’s assertions that social scientists should be reflexive and consider the implications when employing ‘race’ as a term is quite right, his commitment to Marxism, reduces all forms of subordination and resistance to a class perspective and this works to deprive black struggles of effectiveness and agency.

The 1980s saw the Centre for Contemporary Studies in Birmingham create a Race and Politics group that was interested in ‘the changing nature of the politics of race during the 1970s and the new forms of racial ideology’ (Solomos, 2003, p. 28). The group sought to treat race as a complex phenomenon that is continuously changing and as something that creates collective identities between people who belong to the same ‘group’. These scholars also believed that within each of these groups, there are a variety of identities that can be appropriated. For instance, there may be a notion of black identity, but within this identity there is a ‘heterogeneity of national and cultural origins within minority communities’ (Solomos 2003, p. 28).

Paul Gilroy provides a thoughtful critique of Miles’s negative assessment of authors’ employment of the term race:

There is, of course, only one human race, but for Miles this observation is entangled with a demotion of the sociology of ‘race relations’ and becomes the trigger for an intensive critique of all attempts to use the concept of ‘race’ in either description or analysis. It is as if the recognition of the limited value of ‘race’ as an analytical tool provided, in itself, a
coherent theory of contemporary racisms. Miles writes on occasions as if he believes that banishing the concept of ‘race’ is a means to abolish racism (Gilroy 1987, p. 22).

While accepting Miles’s critique of ‘race relations’ as valid, Gilroy asserts that the use of ‘race’ as an analytical concept should remain. Like other black radicals, including bell hooks (1991), Kelley (1994) and Mercer (1994), it was important for Gilroy to re-appropriate dominant ideas of ‘race’ and use them as a tool to aid political struggles within white, capitalist societies: “‘Race’ is a political category that can accommodate various meanings which are in turn determined by the struggle’ (Gilroy 1987, p. 38).

While South Africa has a multiracial parliament that is broadly reflective of the population, black people still have the lowest standard of living by far and it still makes sense to evoke race when discussing inequality. This assessment is in contrast to Miles’s arguments that, if taken to their logical conclusion, assert that struggles against racism, which are based on a group’s racial identities, are misguided and obstructs the wider class struggle. Gilroy is not arguing for a race struggle that should supersede one based on class but rather seeks to provide a more flexible interpretation of social classes. According to Gilroy, these struggles:

Are not conceived as a straightforward alternative to class struggle at the level of economic analysis, but must be recognized to be potentially both an alternative to class consciousness at the political level and as a factor in the contingent processes in which classes are themselves formed. It may be felt, for example, that in Britain during the late 1980s ‘race’, whatever we think of its ideological origins, provides a more potent means to organise and to focus the grievances of certain inner-city populations than the language of class politics with which it must, in a limited sense, compete (Gilroy 1987, p. 27).

During the 1980s and early 1990s, Gilroy as opposed Miles’s belief that ‘race’ should be retained as analytical category, ‘not because it corresponds to any biological or epistemological absolutes, but because it refers investigation to the power that collective identities acquire the means of their roots in tradition’ (1987, p. 247). My use and understanding of race mirrors this, treating it as a social construct but also retaining it in my vocabulary because it is a key way identities are organized.

In Gilroy’s later work (1998 and 2000) there has been a marked evolution in the author’s theorizing around race, seeing him move to a ‘postracial’ stance (2000, p. 42).
and arguing for the ‘renunciation of “race” as a critical concept’ (1998, p. 838). In contrast to earlier writings, where he described race as a useful category for understanding contemporary racial politics, this new position seems to undermine the subaltern struggles Gilroy is so vocal in his support. Gilroy can, in effect, be charged for the offence he accused Miles of, that is, the belief that abandoning race will bring an end to racism. According to Lentin:

Gilroy does not, indeed cannot, provide the answers to the dilemmas he poses...he is, like most contemporary students of ‘race’, racism and anti-racism, haunted by the problems inherent in the recognition of the critical futility of employing ‘race’ as a category and the concomitant realization that, without these tried and tested concepts, anti-racism loses meaning (2000, pp. 100-101).

Although Gilroy presents a really challenging debate in which he talks about the importance of the end of the use of race as a concept, something that could signal the existence of a post-race era, there is a need for a close examination of the practicalities of such a standpoint, simply because of the current structure of society. His arguments seem unrealistic in practice especially when government Affirmative Action (AA) policies enacted in South Africa are racially targeted and it is still at the forefront of people’s consciousness.

Other recent debates around race have been influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism and moved away from seeing racism as uniform and instead point to the variety of different types encountered (Solomos 2003). I think this contribution is important because while I encountered many instances of overt and vocal racism during fieldwork, a lot was subtler and dependent upon context. Earlier theories neglected this important characteristic.

2.4. Musicians’ livelihoods

2.4.1. Musicians’ livelihoods

The working lives of musicians differ from normal workers in some important respects. Like other creative fields, there is an unclear division between paid and unpaid labour: work does not adhere to the usual conventions that guide other more
orthodox professions like stability, set working hours and a visible occupational ladder to climb. This section explores these features as they relate to hip-hop performers in Cape Town and also interrogates the motivations people have in pursuing this precarious and nonstandard profession instead of more conventional alternatives. These include the sociability and identity-markers that this type of work can bring as well as the intrinsic enjoyment and fulfilment it offers.

A selection of studies in creative fields highlight that non-artistic work is a prominent feature of artists’ lives (e.g. Bain 2005). A further feature of working in the field of music is the ‘uncontrollability’ in terms of the amount of time spent pursuing it (Stebbins 2004), which is the outcome of the devotion people often display towards it but also the nonstandard working practices that accompanies such a profession. A musical career often requires a strong level of devotion and along with a tendency to work late makes it difficult to achieve a ‘work-life balance’. This can mean that other commitments such as a supplementary job or family responsibilities get compromised (Fagan 2001) or completely neglected.

As a livelihood, the observations I derived from the working lives of hip-hop performers in Cape Town corresponds to the outlook provided by those authors promoting portfolio working (e.g. Castells 1996), who cite control and choice as central elements of this working style. This term is employed to describe independent workers, outside of a formal organization where individuals can enjoy the benefits of freedom and choice. Although there are innate positive benefits, this type of work is often risky to pursue, offering scare employment opportunities and insecurity (Freakley and Neelands 2003).

The vast majority of sociological literature devoted to work and employment has the tendency to presume that the main motivation for providing labour is to make money (Lane 1991; Himmelweit 2000; Papandreia and Albon 2004) and Bradley et al (2000) have called this assumption ‘the myth of the economic worker’. The prevailing conjecture certainly does not appear to be accurate in terms of people in creative industries and certainly not among the hip-hop artists I encountered during fieldwork.

This provokes the question of why musicians pursue a profession with difficult working conditions and modest financial return. Part of the answer is provided by the
subjective enjoyment, artistic accomplishment, creativity and much greater freedom it brings and the inability to identify a clear distinction between work and leisure activities (Stebbins 2004). For some, it is the music rather than the business of music that brings fulfilment (Giddens 1991; du Gay 1996; Peters 2001) and this corresponds with the work of Cochran (1990) and Wainwright and Turner (2004) who show that individuals can regard a profession with strong intrinsic value as a vocation or ‘calling’. In a context like this the amateur/professional continuum, suggested by Finnegan (1989) and Cottrell (2004) becomes an imprecise and unhelpful division. Stebbins (2004) describes this feature as an ‘occupational devotion’ and separates extrinsic rewards like good pay and prestige with intrinsic rewards brought by pursuing the work itself or having a particular devotion to it. Such intrinsic rewards are necessary for hip-hop practitioners in Cape Town because as I will discuss in chapter 6, low pay and struggles endemic in pursuing this livelihood.

Yet, the entrepreneurial and work activities of hip-hop heads should be understood as a livelihood but also as a lifestyle. I describe it as such to highlight the high level of sociability, sense of belonging and identity that hip-hop participation brings. Bradley et al (2000) argue that a key attribute of work is its ability to contribute to the construction of identity and other scholars have made a similar case, arguing that type of employment is a fundamental way in which people identify and evaluate themselves and others (Noon and Blyton 2002; Bain 2005). Similarly, Cottrell (2004) and Jenkins (2004) show how musicians often use their work diaries as symbols of their identities as true musicians.

Some of the literature on work highlights the importance of other motivating factors in pursuing a particular career path, for instance, Bradley et al (2000) and Noon & Blyton (2002) demonstrate how musicians often receive the social benefits of positive personal interactions from their profession. Cottrell (2004) describes how the enjoyment people get from music is often reinforced by the interactions it fosters and the membership to a ‘musician culture’. Chapter 5, on community, incorporates this theme and illustrates how for the hip-hop heads in Cape-Town; the music scene provides them with deep and rich collaborative work and a high degree of sociability.
2.4.2. The informal economy, social capital and trust

The concept of the informal economy was first introduced by an International Labour Organization (ILO) study of urban labour markets in Ghana (Hart 1973). It has subsequently been used in a plethora of studies on urbanization and poverty in developing countries (Sethuraman 1981; Mazumbar 1981). Castells and Portes argue against using a strict definition of this term and instead advise the application of a ‘common sense’ notion (1989, p. 12). Although, the concept does not lend itself to a precise characterization, it is most readily used to describe economic activities that occur outside the ‘formal’ sector, where transactions cannot be taxed or regulated. Academics have utilized alternative labels to describe this type of economic activity, including, the subterranean economy (Gutmann 1977), the underground economy (Houston 1987), the black economy (Dilnot and Morris 1981), the shadow economy (Cassel and Cichy 1986) and the informal economy (McCrohan and Smith 1986).

In reference to South Africa, there is a relatively long history of writing about the formal and informal sectors with on the one hand, liberal authors arguing that capitalism would eventually undermine apartheid as more and more of the African periphery came to be incorporated into the mainstream (Lipton 1985; O’Dowd 1978) and on the other, Marxist scholars argued that both economies were linked by an exploitative relationship (Legassick 1974; Wolpe 1972).

Activities within the informal economy include both legal and illegal enterprises and also incorporate the provision of goods and services that are legal but that include unregulated production relationships (Raijman 2001). Relating this to fieldwork, when artists performed in shows, they acted legally but were also unlikely to pay tax, which is technically illegal. Activities like these are not intrinsically unlawful but do transgress non-criminal rules of law (Castells and Portes 1989; Portes and Sassen-Koob 1987) and in these undertakings, the violation only occurs in the failure to follow formal regulations (Cross and Johnson 2000). The informal economy also incorporates more serious criminal transgressions like the selling of stolen goods or contraband (e.g. drugs) which I witnessed on occasion and these small-scale criminal activities were consistent with findings by Fagan (1996) Hagedorn (1998) and Vanketash (1997), who suggest that illicit economic activity is the most ready and realistic means of economic survival in communities where unemployment is high. A
further feature of the informal economy is that transactions are likely to be in cash or achieved through barter and these kinds of exchanges were regular occurrences among my research sample. McCrohan et al argue that cash is often used in these transactions so people can avoid a record of the transaction (1991, p. 52-53).

The informal economy also incorporates some forms of wage employment and self-employment. Due to the nonstandard working practices of musicians, the participants of this study were all self-employed. Many studies in this area agree that self-employment in the informal economy is usually supplemented by regular salary employment or state benefits, where people switch between the formal and informal sector (Raijman, 2001; Morales, 1997a and b; Trienda and Raijman 2000). My sample however found it difficult to secure paid employment and many had been unemployed for a long period.

This thesis utilizes the terms ‘hustles’ and the ‘hustler’ to describe the activities of hip-hop musicians working within the informal economy in order to pursue artistic production. The concept of the hustler originates in early depictions of black urban America (e.g. Goines 1972a and Slim 1969) and denotes an individual who works within the informal economy for his own economic benefit. The act of hustling is a recurring theme in hip-hop culture (Hess 2005b) and an individual’s networks or endowment of social capital is often used in this exercise. The hustler often uses social capital and networks of associates in his various endeavours.

The writing on social capital has been highly contested over the past 25 years, since it has become a part of social theory and cultural commentary. Social capital refers to the connections people have within social networks and trust is a central concept within these discussions (e.g. Putnam 2000; Fukuyama 1995; Bourdieu 1986). The concepts are explored here to help explain how hip-hop artists in Cape Town make use of their networks to aid their music-related entrepreneurial activities. Networking is especially valuable for musicians to establish livelihoods, as this is a fundamental way collaborative projects are enacted and bookings performances are made. A growing body of work suggests that when trust and social networks flourish, individuals and groups prosper economically; Putnam for instance has shown social

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8 Some authors, such as Woolcock (2001) regard trust to be the outcome of social capital while others like Cote and Healy (2001) view it as part of the broader shared values that make up social capital.
capital to mitigate the insidious effects of socioeconomic disadvantage (2000, p. 319-325) and Venkatash (2006) has also shown the importance of networks in the underground economy of the urban poor.

The range of definitions given to social capital and the lack of conceptual clarity has caused Lynch et al to warn that it ‘risks trying to explain too much with too little [and] is being adopted indiscriminately, adapted uncritically, and applied imprecisely’ (2000, p. 1204). Some authors have argued that the concept should be abandoned altogether. Other critiques argue that social capital does not represent a new concept, lacks empirical specificity and considerations of power. Nonetheless, in spite of these criticisms I find the concept useful in describing and exploring the resource artists draw upon in the absence of physical and economic capital.

The three thinkers that most commentators highlight in terms of developing a theoretical appreciation of social capital are Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. According to Bourdieu (1986) social capital does not necessarily run alongside economic capital but is still an attribute of elites that helps them maintain power and advantage through particular networks. Coleman (1988) contributed to the development of the concept by theorizing the processes and experiences of marginalized communities who can benefit from it. Comparing the contributions of these two authors, Field argues that, ‘Coleman’s view is…naively optimistic; as a public good, social capital is almost entirely benign in its function, providing for a set of norms and sanctions that allow individuals to cooperate for mutual advantage and with little or no “dark side”. Bourdieu’s usage of the concept, by contrast, virtually allows only for a dark side for the oppressed, and a bright side for the privileged’ (2003, p. 28).

Following on from Coleman’s (1988) understanding that social capital is positive and can be regarded as a resource that individuals can utilize in their relationships with others, we can see that members of community rich in social capital can engage in mutually beneficial collective action, such as pooling resources together in order to achieve a specific goal. Putman shares Coleman’s view, defining social capital as

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9 The Nobel Laureates Arrow (1999) and Solow (1999) have objected to the term because it suggests a misleading analogy to physical capital. Arrow (1999) argues there are striking differences between the two, for instance investment in physical capital involves sacrificing current benefits for future gains and it is a property that can be sold or transferred to other. Both are not true of social capital.
‘features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (1995, p. 67). Both these authors highlight the benefit it provides in individuals’ propensity to cooperate, to be able to coordinate projects and to reciprocate. Subsequently, I have found the concept useful in explaining the variety of resources musicians can draw upon when pursuing a career in hip-hop.

Portes (1998) followed Bourdieu (1986) in highlighting the negative side of social capital, illustrating that it can mean that outsiders are excluded and arguing that strongly bonded communities can be closed-minded and even hostile to others. I found that hip-hop networks and collaborative activities were centred around ethnicity and often people from other races were excluded from collaborative projects and networks of trust. This corresponds to Zhou’s (1992) observation that if businessmen wants to hire people of another ethnicity, they often face the normative demands of their own community not to. Tilly (1999) has demonstrated how this type of opportunity hoarding, where insiders seek to preserve their advantages for their own use, leads to durable inequality between groups where those with more resources retain their privilege. During fieldwork, such opportunity hoarding was evidenced among black and coloured performers when they would overwhelmingly provide help and opportunities to other hip-hop heads of the same race but deny them to outsiders.

The hip-hop community I studied was deeply unequal and there has been some discussion in the literature regarding the relationship between inequality and trust with Wilkinson and Pickett asking if, ‘inequality create low levels of trust, or does mistrust create inequality?’ (2009, p. 54). Putnam viewed community and inequality as ‘mutually reinforcing’, with causal arrows running in both directions (2000, p. 359). Other writers, like Uslander (2002) and Rothstein (2005) have argued that it is inequality that affects trust rather than the other way round. Social capital can be seen to lie in the social obligations and connections that link individuals and in this regard the experience can be stifling, as people are obliged to help others. Portes (1998) has shown that this can restrict individual freedom, suggesting that it works to keep people in a lowly position and makes it difficult for ambitious people to escape.

Criticising that most authors on social capital (with the exception of Putnam,) failed to separate different types of social capital, Woolcock distinguishes between three
types. These are *bonding social capital*, which denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours; *bridging social capital*, which encompasses more distant ties of similar persons, such as loose friendships and colleagues and *linking social capital*, which reaches out to different people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available within the community (2001, p. 13-14). I find this separation useful in distinguishing the different types of networks artists often drew upon in pursuing their entrepreneurial deeds. For instance, in putting on a show artists might draw upon bonding social capital by inviting their close friends and family to the gig and inviting friends who are artists to appear in the line-up. They might use bridging social capital to invite a wider group of people at the event and use linking social capital to seek funding from commercial and non-governmental organizations.

In a similar respect, some authors have described that there are two types of trust; those which one has in individuals known personally and those with people not known. Under this understanding, Putnam (2000) uses the terms of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ trust where thick trust is seen as a property of intimate social networks and thin trust are ones you have to community members you do not know personally. Similarly, Francis Fukuyama writes about a ‘radius of trust’, which is a circle of people who cooperate as a norm (2000, p. 4). In explaining this conception, Fukuyama (2000) uses the example of Latin American societies who have a narrow radius for family and close friends but a wider one with others who they treat with a lower standard of behaviour.

Trust is closely linked to norms of reciprocity (Putnam 1993; Coleman 1990), showing itself in Cape Town hip-hop by going to each others gigs and borrowing equipment from each other and it is acts like this that make cooperative endeavours feasible (e.g. Arrow 1974; Gambetta 1988). Trust is also a key to positive interpersonal relationships in various settings (e.g. Fox 1974; Lewis and Weigert 1985) because it is central to how we interact with others (Berscheid 1994). Trust is also of central importance in working relationships (Gabarro 1978). In Cape Town, trust was fundamentally important for artists because there are not that many effective

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10 Sixsmith et al (2001) contradicts this type of dichotomous framework, arguing that trust is a lot more dynamic and multi-dimensional than this.
legal sanctions in hustling affairs and it is under these conditions that, ‘trust plays so prominent a role, relatively unmediated by the formal obligations of kinship and trust (Hart 1988, p. 178). Like the frafra in Hart’s ethnography, the economy of Cape Town’s hustlers is on the margins of the industrial world and their associations are amongst equals, there is no hierarchy so trust becomes very important for individuals conducting entrepreneurial activities

2.5. Community

2.5.1. Approaching community

Although the expression ‘community’ is described by Abercrombie et al as ‘one of the most elusive and vague in sociology’ (1984, p.44), it is nonetheless invaluable in conceptualizing human social arrangements beyond the private sphere of the home and family. The concept became one of the key ideas and topics of intellectual discussion in the 20th century and I use its entry in the authoritative keywords, written by Williams (1976), to unpack this familiar, yet confusing notion. The term has a strong link to place and in its most common usage is employed to denote a sense of ‘immediacy or locality’ (1976, p. 76). It has also been used to provide a ‘contrast...between the more direct, more total and therefore more significant relationships’ of association to the ‘instrumental relationships of the state’ (Williams 1976, p. 77) and this understanding was formalized by Tönnies (1963 [1887]) in the distinction he articulated between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. It is also utilized to mean ‘the quality of holding something in common, as in community of interest’ and also ‘a sense of common identity’ (Williams 1976, p. 76) that can surround a musical culture like hip-hop. The author also remarks that it distinguishes itself from other associational vocabulary in that it is overwhelming used in positive terms:

What is most important, perhaps, is unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term (Williams 1976, p. 75-76).

Cohen’s (1985) work on the symbolic construction of community has become one of the most influential contributions to this field. Instead of pursuing a definitional
approach that most authors had followed, the author considered the meaning that people attach to community. According to the author, ‘people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity’ (Cohen 1985, p. 118). From this perspective, the experiences and feelings of members, and the way they express these can be explored. Cohen argues that the central process in the construction of meaning is the way people create boundaries around them and others who ‘belong’, which exclude those who do not. Unlike fixed boundaries drawn onto maps, these divisions can be subtle and even invisible to non-members and are determined by the presence of attributes or values. Cohen’s approach thus puts processes of differentiation and identification at the heart of meanings of community and argues that these processes largely take place in the minds of individuals.

Following this, Hoggett has suggested that the sociological theoretical development in the field of identity and selfhood have played a fundamental role in ‘opening out the conceptual space within which non-place forms of community can be understood’ (1997, p. 7). Cohen’s (1985) conception facilitates an understanding of a community of interest, like the one that surrounds hip-hop, which brings people together through sharing a common group identity and an attachment to a common pursuit. In this thesis I follow this path and align myself to those authors (e.g. Crow and Allan 1994) who discuss such ‘communities of interest’. An urban environment like Cape Town provides an ideal site to interrogate these formations because cities allow thinly thread minorities, like artists or students, or in our case, hip-hop heads to move towards each other and produce ‘thriving social worlds’ (Fischer 1975, p. 1326). Complementing the perspective offered by Cohen (1985), Willmott (1989) has convincingly argued that the concept of a ‘shared identity’ should be central to any understanding of community.

Similar to Cohen’s (1985) work, Benedict Anderson’s discussion of national identity in *Imagined Community* (1983) helped establish the conceptual space where the social construction of community and community identity can be contemplated. Anderson suggests that ‘all communities larger than primordial villages (and perhaps even these) are imagined (1983, p. 6) as members hold a mental picture of their affinity to others; either having similar interests or identifying with one another, even if they will
never know most of their fellow members. This idea is appropriate to modern idioms of community that are not based on face-to-face interaction like the ‘gay community’ or ‘the global hip-hop community’, which both have multiple layers of interaction that are formed around a particular interest.

One weakness of the work of Cohen and Anderson is that they de-emphasize divisions that can exist within a community. For instance, while members of a nation-state may share a strong sense of belonging to this grouping, there might be intense struggles within due to distinctions of class, generation or ethnicity. Relating this to the social world of Cape Town hip-hop, the separation of races in the local scene broadly reflects wider divisions in society. Even though people shared a collective hip-hop identity, these communities act as ‘an arena in which social divisions are given expression’ (Crow and Maclean 2000, p. 240) and can be explained through a Weberian understanding that distinctive interest such as class will group people together, especially when individuals share chances for ‘a supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experiences’ (1947, p. 181). Corresponding to the work by Tropman et al (2006), the hip-hop communities of interest in Cape Town might be seen to work as communities operating within wider (black and coloured) communities.

I found that a range of complementary processes, including differentiation, competition and discrimination, worked to exclude people from these ethnically exclusive ‘communities of interest’. Differentiation between ethnic groups in Cape Town is encouraged and constantly reinforced through broader common practices, organized social relationships as well as the allocation of goods (Gieryn 1999; Zerubavel 1997). This corresponds to the work of Wacquant and Wilson (1989) that showed how economic and status (or ‘ethnic’) attributes often combine. This division can lead to inequality and discrimination as some of the benefits of being a member of a community are denied to outsiders. Each of these groups performs a type of opportunity hoarding (Tilly 1999) that works to limit the hip-hop prospects of others. The social identity that racial groups in Cape Town share encourages people to have a preference for people like them (Tajfel 1981) and this leads to favouritism towards other members of their own ethnicity and discrimination against non-members. These processes work to fracture the overall hip-hop community in the city.
2.5.2. Online and virtual communities

The theorising of virtual communities has become important in the study of communities (e.g. Castells 2001; Jones 1995; Rheingold 1993; Shields 1996; Smith and Kollock 1999). The Internet has and has greatly reshaped the significance of place (Harvey 1989) and provided new possibilities for individuals to pursue communities of interest on a global scale and associate with those who are truly like-minded (Rheingold 1993; Jones 1995; Holmes 1997). Wellman and Hampton (1999) further argue that the Internet helps to shift people’s interactions away from ascribed characteristics like gender, age, or class and towards ‘achieved’ characteristics such as common lifestyles and hobbies.

While the Internet has created an environment where Cape Town hip-hop heads can connect with others of similar interest, it also provides an avenue for new markets, the exploration of funding opportunities and collaborative work with artists and producers outside of Cape Town. The World Bank has recognized these possibilities and argued that online communities can work as a development strategy: ‘information technology has the potential to increase social capital – and in particular bridging social capital which connects actors to resources, relationships and information beyond their immediate environment…the internet offers opportunities to enhance social capital among craftspeople with a cooperative and builds bridging social capital by connecting producers with consumers who would otherwise not be able to do business together’ (1999, para. 2).

Wellman (2001) uses survey-based evidence to show that Internet connections complement rather than replace everyday interactions. As well as increasing networks or social capital, online interactions can therefore work to complements pre-existing communities. During fieldwork, artists often used the Internet and to a lesser degree mobile communication in order to publicise events and coordinate people when organizing things like rehearsals and meetings. In this sense, the Internet can increase the importance of locality and work to empower local communities (Borgia and Castells 1997).

Similarly, Urry (2002) has argued that virtual interaction will not replace physical co-presence and that presence is needed for some types of interaction to flourish,
especially those that give rise to social capital. Fukuyama underlines this point, asserting ‘when the information age’s most enthusiastic apostles celebrate the breakdown of hierarchy and authority, they neglect one critical factor: trust, and the shared ethical norms that underlie it’ (1995, p. 25). Such online communities are therefore likely to be ‘thin’ and it are unlikely to generate strong forms of engagement and commitment’. This does not mean however that they are ineffective as I showed in the previous section how such thin communities or ‘weak ties’ can be beneficial offering more than just ‘mindless spectacle and escapism’ (Keller 2003, p. 294).

2.6. Manufacturing authenticity

2.6.1. Authentic hip-hop

Rather than being a state, achievement or condition, authenticity is a construction. The concept is difficult to describe concisely and because it ‘is implicitly a “polemical concept”’ (Trilling 1972, p. 94) (as is community for example) is best comprehended by looking at how people juxtapose it with what it is not. It is generally used to explain the assumed condition of being ‘genuine’, ‘trustworthy’, ‘sincere’ or ‘real’ in opposition to what is assumed to be ‘false’, ‘fake’ and ‘insincere’. Authenticity also has to be recognized within an implied community, which can do the recognizing. A holy relic for example, like a saint’s bones, is only sacred because it is recognized by an imagined community of believers as authentic. Authenticity may be presented as an inherent quality (an essence) but that act is itself an aspect of the way the notion, the very idea, is constructed culturally.

Authenticity is a coveted trait within musical cultures and according to Frith has been an essential concept ‘for critics struggling to distinguish jazz from Tin Pan Ally pop in the 1920s and black jazz from white jazz in the 1930s, as for critics asserting rock’s superiority to teen pop in the late 1960s’ (1987, p. 136). Authenticity is an important mode of evaluation for a wide range of musical genres, almost ‘becoming a synonym for “good”, while seeming to confer upon a performance some magical property that it did not have before’ (Kivy 1995, p. 1). Consequently it becomes an important attribute for performers because it is a route to symbolic capital, encouraging positive social interactions and working as a boundary device, conferring membership to
particular groups (Williams 2006; Thornton 1996).

The hip-hop scholars Rose (1994) Smith (1997) and Krims (2000) have all argued that authenticity has taken on a heightened significance in hip-hop and that the understanding an artist attaches to it is necessary in establishing their own sense of authenticity. According to McLeod, ‘The concept of authenticity lies at the nexus of key cultural symbols in hip-hop’ (1999, p. 134). Indeed, this concept has been closely linked to the culture since its birth in the late 1970s, which some authors (e.g. Dyson 2004, p. 61) link to its early expression within socially and economically marginalized districts and others (e.g. McLeod 1999) connect it to being perceived as a safeguard that protects it from mainstream assimilation.

There are numerous permutations on the theme of authenticity within hip-hop and it is therefore difficult to succinctly outline the full range of meanings attributed to it. McLeod (1999) and Harkness (2006) have examined these and outlined a full range of potential claims. McLeod sets out six dimensions of hip-hop authenticity which are outlined as: socio-psychological; race; political-economic; gender; socio-locational and cultural. Within these dimensions, the author juxtaposes the authentic against inauthentic (or the ‘real’ against the ‘fake’) and these are determined to be: staying true to yourself vs. following mass trends; black vs. white; the underground vs. commercial; hard vs. soft; the streets vs. the suburbs and the old school vs. the mainstream. Harkness (2006) adds the notion of the skilled artist vs. the unskilled. Within hip-hop therefore, there are several strains of authenticity an artist can claim and appeal to.

Following Adorno (1998 [1941]), Marcuse (1991 [1964]) and other cultural critics of the Frankfurt school, authenticity is often set in opposition to mainstream commercialism and the influences of the market because these are seen to serve only the ‘frivolous appetites of spectators’ (Taruskin 1997, p. 251) and provide a corrosive influence on artistic expression as the producer becomes only interested in producing a commodity. However, a commercial artist can be evaluated as authentic if he appeals to other strains by staying true to himself, and not being ‘influenced by others, subject to peer pressure and conformity (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995, p. 212). Relating this to hip-hop, Armstrong (2004) analyses Eminem’s authenticating strategies he used to overcome the inauthenticity of whiteness. According to the
author, he established his authenticity by claiming ‘local allegiances and territorial identities’ and establishing a connection to ‘an original source of rap’ through locale, style, and links to an established artist’ (2004, p. 342-343).

There are numerous ways a hip-hop artist can claim and perform authenticity. In helping examine these, I utilize the dramaturgical perspective of human interaction, articulated by Goffman (1959), which describes the process of impression management through goal-directed consciousness and presentation of self. In this, authenticity claims within hip-hop are regarded as a conscious effort to manipulate artistic appearance. Persisting with the theatrical imagery, artists can utilize a selection of props, costumes and scripts to project authenticity and these can be seen in style and dress of the artist, music videos, album covers and general image. The actions of a performer constitute another way that they can construct authenticity; in hip-hop this can be enacted by not going commercial or by participating in social and political activism.

The analysis of how claims are constructed, boundaries are made and redrawn, accepted and rejected provides an opportunity to understand the process of manufacturing authenticity within a musical culture in a specific locale. In this thesis, I use the phrase ‘manufacturing authenticity’ to describe the process of authenticity making within the Cape Town hip-hop scene. The first stage of this process is outlined as claims making, when an artist uses the dominant understandings of authenticity found within the culture in order to assert his own. Because authenticity is essentially a polemical concept, claiming it also makes an assertion of what is inauthentic and in doing so seeks to draw boundaries around the culture that works to exclude others. Performativity is a central component in this social process and is the primary method in which authenticity is claimed. The final stage of the process involves evaluation and validation where the claim is either accepted or rejected by others.

As validation plays a central part in this process, constructions of authenticity are negotiable which makes it is possible for an artist to subvert the generally understood boundaries. Within popular music, this strategy has been illustrated by Leach, who describes how the Spice Girls subverted traditional notions of authenticity even though intuitively they seem to be the embodiment of the inauthentic: undeniably a
commercial product, poor standard of singing and put together artificially by a management company. However, they were able to reverse their markers of inauthenticity by claiming ‘the authenticity of the ordinary, rejecting the elitist pedestaling of talented instrumentals (and indeed music talent in general) within our culture’ (Leach 2001, p. 149). By contesting, the very parameters of authenticity, the Spice Girls successfully ‘upset the clarity of authenticity’ (2001, p. 162), allowing them to claim the status of being authentic artists.

Due to this on-going negotiation, Peterson (1997) notes that authenticity is fluid and what was authentic in the past is not what is authentic today and this ongoing negotiation is enacted not just by the musicians, but also from the audience, economic interests, and the shifting image of the performer. This process can be seen in the development of commercial hip-hop over the past ten years where the changing demographic of fans, the increase in commercialization and the changing fashions of the hip-hop performer have changed what is regarded as authentic or ‘real’ hip-hop. Due to the changing nature of what is understood to be authentic, it is important to locate claims within the environment where they are created, distributed, evaluated and consumed. For this purpose I employ the production of culture perspective advocated by Peterson and Anand (2004).

2.6.2. The production of culture perspective

The production of culture perspective focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved (Peterson and Anand 2004, p. 311).

The ‘production of culture’ perspective was originally developed by Peterson (1976) and is used here to aid an anthropological insight into the making and shaping of allusions to authenticity in the production of hip-hop in Cape Town. Instead of looking at culture in boxed-off isolation, this perspective asks that the process and circumstances of its making be taken into account. The perspective is grounded in the constructivist view of culture arguing that it is the scattered and mundane processes of production that shape the aesthetic and expressive features of it. This approach seeks
to show how the expressive symbols of culture come to be (DiMaggio 2000), allowing an exploration of the ways music is made and given meaning.

This framework centres on the structure of the industry and Peterson summarizes that:

> Work in the production-of-culture perspective has identified six kinds of factors that shape the sorts of symbols that can emerge. These include law, technology, industry structure, organizational structure, occupational career and market (1990, p. 98).

This perspective attempts therefore to present cultural artefacts as the result of collective innovation by a number of individuals whose participation varies but who are connected by the organization of production. Cultural production in this sense looks beyond the creative and innovative inspirations of individual actors and towards the conditions under which they are mobilized.

From fieldwork experiences, peculiarities of production were shown to alter the music produced as well as the presentation of it. For instance few local artists had a publishing deal and this greatly affected distribution logistics as well as presentation, causing them to produce a less visually pleasing, glossy product. While some artists in Cape Town consciously attempt to make their music commercially viable, because this is an incredibly difficult task, a significant number work to shape their musical products in a way to get subcultural capital among their peers. A criticism of the perspective offered by Peterson and Anand (2004) is that there is a heavy bias towards the structure and functioning of the recording industry and the central element of it in this process did not resonate with an underground hip-hop scene like the one I studied.

A further weakness of this perspective is that it neglects the situated nature of the production of culture. Recent work in economic geography has attempted to address the issue of the line between economy and culture and its spatiality by drawing on institutional perspectives in order to provide an account of the situated nature of economic action and the ways they are articulated by place (Amin and Thrift 1994; Hodgson 1988) and to cultural production (Scott 2000; Storper 1997). In line with this critique, Pratt (2004) calls for a ‘spatialized production of culture’ perspective.
Another criticism is that the framework does not completely reveal all factors that work to shape culture like individual creativity (DeNora 1995) and social conditions (Liebes and Katz 1990). Lieberson (2000) has shown that there are also internal variations of taste and Kaufman (2004) has illustrated that culture can change and reproduce itself independent of systems of production or the society that contains them. Furthermore, Alexander states that ‘production of culture theorists [ignore] what is special about art, what distinguishes it from the production of automobiles or shoes’ (2003, p. 80). According to the author the perspective denies the uniqueness of art and its essence that separates it from the production of other commodities.

Recent developments in the production of culture perspective allow an incorporation of authenticity unconnected to cultural products. According to Peterson and Anand the perspective has been ‘adapted to informal situations in which individuals and groups select among the symbolic products on offer and in the process create collective meanings and identities for themselves’ (2004, p. 324). Peterson (2001) uses the term the ‘autoproduction’ of culture to describe this active production of lifestyle by individuals and groups. This development is relevant to my own study because in Cape Town, artists not only work to make their music seem authentic but, they also perform authenticity through a range of performances such as remaining underground by not appealing to recording companies and also through social and political activism. Consequently, the advancement of this perspective has been utilized by a host of scholars to illustrate how collectives create meanings that constitute distinctive identities (e.g. Grazian 2004 on blues fans; Fine 2003 on self-taught artists).
Chapter 3. The city and people of Cape Town

3.1. The city of Cape Town

Cape Town might be the most beautiful city in the world. The handsome metropolis is located on the most southwestern tip of the African continent, positioned between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It is the capital of the Western Cape, which is one of nine provinces that make up the Republic of South Africa and the second most populous city. It is also South Africa’s oldest urban settlement, founded in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company.

![Provinces of South Africa](image)

Figure 3.1. The provinces of South Africa

The picturesque Table Mountain (affectionately known as ‘Mama Africa’) dominates the skyline and if climbed on a clear day, you can get a real sense of the city. Facing north, you will see the new 4.4 billion Rand Greenpoint Stadium, custom built for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Glance left, onto the slopes of Lions Rump Hill, you will see Bo Kaap (meaning ‘above the Cape’), the Malay area of town where charming and
colourful streets with the most striking lime green, florescent orange and bright pink painted houses are found. The neighbourhoods of Gardens and Tamnboerskloof occupy the foot of the mountain and house some of the city’s most expensive properties, enclosed by high walls decorated with razor wires and routinely patrolled, twenty-four hours a day by private security firms. Beyond this, the downtown area has a truly cosmopolitan feel with boutique shops, European-style cafes and an abundance of lively bars and trendy restaurants catering for all discernable tastes. Further along is the upscale and gentrified Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, monopolized by five star hotels and a shopping mall filled with exclusive brands and overpriced shops. The mountainous borders consisting of ‘Mama Africa’, Signal Hill, Lion’s Head and Devil’s Peak form a natural amphitheatre around these areas that are collectively referred to as the Central Bowl District (or CBD). Although only 18 of my respondents (out of 67) lived here, these locations were important to all because this is where most hip-hop shows were staged and a lot of artists’ entrepreneurial and social activities were enacted.

Further along, you will see the ‘up and coming’ areas of Woodstock and Observatory, which over time have become popular among students and young professionals. To the north and south of the city, the overwhelmingly white and middle class suburbs house the Presidential residence, a large University campus and the national rugby and cricket grounds where the Proteas and Springboks ply their trade. These areas contained a handful of clubs and bars where some shows were staged and ten of my research sample lived here.

Looking over the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by choppy waters, is the notorious Robben Island where Nelson Mandela, Jacob Zuma and other Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) freedom fighters were imprisoned before a negotiated settlement brought democracy to the region. Looking back over the City Bowl, you might notice the scarred and barren District Six where, some decades ago, the streets were bulldozed one by one and the multiracial residents ordered to live in exile with people of their own ethnicity in designated ‘group areas’ on the Cape Flats.

11 Refer to Appendix A for the characteristics of informants I had had prolonged contact with during fieldwork.
12 This translates into English as ‘Spear of the Nation’ and was the active military wing of the African National Congress (ANC).
The Cape Flats are to the east of the city and holds the majority of the area’s Townships and is where the majority of my research sample lived (27 of respondents lived in black Townships and 12 lived in Coloured Townships). These areas were treated as a dumping ground during apartheid and are indentified by their high levels of gangsterism, drug abuse, crime, extreme poverty and inadequate housing, where many live in shacks without electricity or running water. The European, cosmopolitan and affluent feel of central Cape Town provides a truly shameful paradox when compared to the way people live on the Cape Flats and while there have been monumental political, social and economic transformations since the dismantling of apartheid, this city and the country as a whole, still faces daunting challenges in redressing the historical imbalances between racial groups. Aesthetically, Cape Town might indeed be the most beautiful city in the world but an examination of the repellent distresses and inequalities that prevail, could also lead it to be regarded as one of the ugliest.

The wounds of apartheid therefore are not fully healed and are still etched on to the landscape and people of Cape Town. This cruel and discredited ideology was instigated after the Second World War when the National Party (NP) was elected to power and formulated five parliamentary Acts, in the four subsequent years, with the explicit and systematic aim to socially engineer the population according to racial classification. These Acts were: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, the Immorality Act of 1950, the Populations Registration Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953. These wide-ranging laws, along with other measures, constitute what is referred to as apartheid, the Afrikaans word for ‘separateness’. The defining characteristic of this political system was the hierarchical ordering of economic, political and social structures on the basis of race, identified by physical characteristics such as skin colour, hair texture and so on. It excluded ‘non-Europeans’ from many of the civil, political and economic rights enjoyed by ‘Europeans’, such as the right to vote, freedom of movement, full citizenship, and the ability to own property and work in certain areas of South Africa. It confined ‘non-Europeans’ to inferior housing, schools, universities, hospitals and transport; and prohibited sexual relations and marriage across the colour bar. It also had the psychological effect of making a lot of ‘non-Europeans’ believe that their cultures were deeply inferior (Lipton 1985, p. 14-15).
Eventually, due to a combination of mounting international pressure and internal resistance, the National Party entered into a negotiated settlement with their enemies that made room for the first democratic elections. On May 10th 1994, the post-apartheid era commenced, heralded by the election of South Africa’s first black president, Nelson Mandela. My fieldwork began only twelve and a half years later.

As a consequence of the Coloured Labour Preference Act, which imposed a high restriction on black urbanization and being the historical birthplace of coloured people\textsuperscript{13}, Cape Town has a higher than average coloured population (composing 54% of all residents, compared to the national average of 9%). Unlike other South African cities, there is not a black majority (accounting for only 27% of the population, compared to 79% country-wide) and there is also a larger ratio of whites (accounting for 18% of people in Cape Town but only 10% of South Africans). The difference in racial composition of the research area and the country as a whole is illustrated in the following pie charts, compiled by data provided by Statistics South Africa (2001).

\textsuperscript{13} The term was originally coined in Cape Town to describe the offspring of Dutch settlers and Malay slaves.
The more even demographic split has facilitated the fragmentation of the Cape Town hip-hop community along racial lines (this theme is explored further in chapter 5). This makes the local scene stand apart from others in the country, like the ones found in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth that are less racially fractured and tend to be monopolized by black performers.

This chapter is divided into three sections and provides a background of the most important topics that frames the unique hip-hop scene found within this unique urban environment. Due to its continuing pervasiveness, I argue that an appreciation of racial separation should be the cornerstone of understanding any aspect of social life within Cape Town so the chapter begins with a discussion of the impact it has had on research participants. In this I discuss the high degree of inequality between racial groups and how they are further divided by having each having their own distinct identity and language. The second section interrogates the three key identifiers of the research sample. Beginning with an analysis of Township life, where the majority of respondents resided, this part continues with a discussion of the position of youth in South African society (60 out of 67 of respondents were under 30) and finally, the issue of gender and gender relations is explored in order to account for the heavily skewed proportion of male practitioners in the city (this is reflected in my sample,
which consisted of only 5 females). The final section, entitled ‘Pursuing hip-hop in Cape Town’ focuses explicitly on the issues that more directly frame hip-hop activity. The first topic tackled provides a background of the cultural industries that determines the broader musical environment, business opportunities and modes of cultural dissemination available to local performers. Wherever hip-hop has travelled, it has displayed a phenomenal ability to be localized by the host environment (Mitchell 2001) and this section continues with a description of how the hip-hop scene in Cape Town has developed over time. Through fieldwork, it was found that modes of communication were closely entwined to practitioners’ social and musical activities and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the technological environment my sample found themselves in, concentrating on the use of the Internet and mobile telephones.

3.2. Racial separateness

3.2.1. Inequality

Despite great hardship in many areas of Cape Town, it has relatively low poverty compared to the rest of the country. The following graph illustrates this, showing that the Western Cape has half the poverty levels of South Africa (16.7% instead of 33.4%), and has the least poverty out of all the nine provinces in South Africa and this is reflected in the Western Cape also enjoying the highest life expectancy14 (estimated to be over 60 years) (Statistics South Africa 2007a: Figures 2 & 3).

14 However, this is expected to decrease due to higher morality rates associated with HIV/AIDS (Groenewald 2008, p. 11)
Despite the relatively low poverty\textsuperscript{16}, levels of inequality in the Western Cape are extremely high. The country as a whole has been ranked as the third most unequal in the world\textsuperscript{17} (Zegeye and Maxted 2002, p. 13) and the extreme wealth and poverty in Cape Town make the city one of its most unequal places. This provoked former President Mbeki to describe South Africa as consisting of ‘two nations’, one of white wealth and another of black poverty. While this statement captures the huge wealth disparities which democracy has done little to alleviate, by lumping black and coloured people together, it provides a crude and overly simplistic interpretation of the racial dynamics of Cape Town.

A study organized by the city of Cape Town\textsuperscript{18} found ‘large gaps’ between levels of living in the city, with some suffering from ‘extreme deprivation’:

This study has demonstrated spatially the large “gaps” that exist in levels of living in the City of Cape Town. Undoubtedly there are large areas, some of which are contiguous while others are almost islands that are

\textsuperscript{15} Provinces appear abbreviated. L=Limpopo; EC=Eastern Cape; KZN=KwaZulu-Natal; M=Mpumalanga; FS=Free State; NC=Northern Cape; G=Gauteng; WC=Western Cape and SA=South Africa.

\textsuperscript{16} Although poverty is still extremely high by Western standards.

\textsuperscript{17} This was calculated in 2000 using the gini coefficient.

\textsuperscript{18} Entitled, ‘The Spatial Distribution of Socio-Economic Status, Service Levels and levels of living in the city of Cape Town 2001 – to Highlight Suburbs in Need’.
suffering conditions of extreme deprivation (Romanovsky and Gie 2006, p. 12).

The hierarchy of social life that colonialism and later apartheid instilled has created a vicious cycle which black and coloured groups find hard to escape. The unevenness in urban development still persists today, with white and coloured communities tending to have better maintained infrastructure than black ones. A further contribution to the widening wealth gap in Cape Town between racial groups is the number of HIV/AIDS infections in the city. This illness has affected the black population most and increases poverty through the loss of household income and reduced educational prospects (Van Donk 2002).

Following on from their manifesto commitment, the ANC government of 1994 initially adopted a radical program of reconstruction and development in an attempt to redress these high degree of inequality. However, less than two years later, a neoliberal economic policy was introduced to replace these far-reaching programs (Bond 2000). The government was subsequently accused by many (voters, the labour movement, trade unions and other sectors of civil society) of selling out the people’s mandate to the IMF and corporate structures (Khosa 2002). The disappointment of poor service delivery and continued inequality is compounded by the large expectation many black and coloured people had in the new democratic government.

Surprisingly, state incompetence has been used as an excuse for the adoption of fiscally conservative and neoliberal policies19 and the government has admitted that the ‘experience of the past two years [has] cast doubt on the capacity of the public sector to absorb significant resources’ (DoF 1996). A large contribution to the disaffection that people feel towards service delivery is the perceived corruption that is understood to be endemic, entrenched and widespread, especially among those with very senior positions in government (PSC 2007). The nepotism in allocating contracts and organizing supply chains has created an environment where people are not brought to account and poor performance is tolerated (Hemson et al 2009). Justice Malala sums up the popular sentiment in the following quote:

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19 The most far-reaching of these has been the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR).
So five years of work has been almost completely lost. Worse, millions of precious rands have been lost. But it is the way my village looks poor, shoddy and done as quickly as possible by contractors – fronted by black people who seem to know nothing about business – out for a quick profit. (Justice Malala, cited in the Sunday Times of South Africa, 17 December 2000)

Unemployment rates are a further indicator and source of racial inequality in the Western Cape. At the time of the national census in 2001 there were 3.1 million people aged 15 to 65 years and of these, 1.5 million were employed, 527 000 were unemployed and 1.1 million were not economically active\(^{20}\). The following graph shows that unemployment rates differ markedly amongst races, revealing that 32.9% of black people are unemployed, 14.1% of coloured people and only 2.9% of whites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Not econ. Active</th>
<th>Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3. Distribution of the population by labour market status and ethnicity in the Western Cape, (Derived from Statistics South Africa 2006)

South Africa also has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world (McGrath 1994, p. 49) and major shifts in global economic structures have acted to exacerbate this by moving employment away from manufacturing and towards corporate, public and not-for profit services (Meyekiso 2003). The Cape Town economy has profited recently from the growth of its tourism, film and finance industries (Field and Swanson 2007) but all these rely upon skilled (and therefore,  

\(^{20}\) The latter includes students, homemakers, the disabled, those too ill to work and anyone not seeking work.
predominantly white) workers. The following chart offers good evidence of employment stratification with over 50% of white people in Cape Town being employed as a manager or professional but only 10% of black people working in this sector. While coloured people enjoy slightly more prestigious employment than the black population, there is still a large gap between them and whites.

Table 3.4. Occupational distribution of the employed in each population group (Derived from Statistics South Africa 2007b)

As well as socially separating groups, high levels of inequality between racial groups also affect the different levels of economic capital practitioners can bring to bear in their hip-hop activities. For instance, I found that white and coloured people were more likely to DJ or write graffiti, which entails a continual financial outlay for the purchase of (as well as other equipment) vinyl and paint. It also has a bearing on entrepreneurial activities as those from lower or no income groups (typically blacks) have to struggle to secure mundane things like transport and food as a prerequisite before they can pursue musical activity. Within the world of hip-hop, this typically works to give coloured performers more economic resources, power and autonomy to pursue their artistic endeavours.
3.2.2. Social separation

During apartheid, the Group Areas Act designated central Cape Town a white area and sought to use the coloured population as a physical buffer between them and blacks, utilizing barriers, such as motorways or railway tracks as partitions (Christopher 2001a). The following illustration provides a simplified model of the archetypal ‘apartheid city’.

![Figure 3.2. Simplified ‘model apartheid city’ (Source: Christopher 2001a, p. 10)](image)

Post apartheid legislation has begun to return black and coloured residents to the areas they used to live before enforced segregation but this process has been slow and
arduous and does not integrate the many black people who moved to Cape Town since the Group Areas Act was repealed. Non-enforced integration has only occurred gradually and sporadically, mainly in the former white suburbs of Muizenberg, Mowbray and Sea Point but almost wholly absent from the most affluent or marginalized areas of town (Field and Swanson 2007, p. 5). During an interview, a popular coloured producer commented on how the demographic composition of the city means that MCs of different races literally ‘come from different walks of life’.

Arsenic: MCs come from different walks of life in Cape Town, and we are all divided in Cape Town, the way demographically it is set up, because of apartheid years, it’s all set up the same you know, the black folk is this side, the coloured folk is that side, the white folk is that side.

Interview extract

This physical segregation means that geography, class and ethnicity are all intimately connected in this environment and there has even been some evidence that the segregation of racial groups has exacerbated since apartheid legislation has been repealed. An intergovernmental report, presided over by President Mbeki, the Premier of the Western Cape and the Executive Mayor of the City of Cape Town has conceded for instance that: ‘urban growth in Cape Town since 1994 has tended to reinforce apartheid spatial patterns with its skewed distribution of opportunities’ (City of Cape Town 2006, p. 6).

Before reconciliation, this geographical separation or ‘grand apartheid’ was complemented by ‘petty apartheid’, which segregated people in more routine ways. By determining what schools, hospitals and even park benches people could make use of, most lived unaware about the everyday lives and realities of people outside their racial group. Although apartheid has come to an end, the pattern of social separation has continued and is especially visible in Cape Town, which according to Besteman has become ‘the least integrated city in South Africa’ (2008, p. 12). During an interview, a black rapper called MC Check, commenting on the continuing salience of this historical legacy, described the social distance between black and coloured people as a ‘big break or missing link’.

21 A 70 year old resident told me the government said at present he was too young to be moved as preference is given to those in their 80s and 90s.
Check: It’s like little bits of apartheid that have tainted like not only the hip-hop but just like mind sets in Cape Town. Because, you find there’s a big break or a missing link between black people and so-called coloured people.

**Interview extract**

Social separation in this city is especially visible because the racial composition is more balanced than the rest of the country and some of my respondents commented directly on how this separation has led to the polarization of the local hip-hop scene. The following quote derives from Son of Virtue (SOV), a talented coloured MC and producer who had recently moved to city to study music production.

SOV: Everyone knows Cape Town hip-hop is racially segregated in a big way…I’ve been to a couple of performances in those places [Mitchell’s Plain and the suburbs]…it’s always the same cats that are playing there. You know, like Emile will be there, Azul will be there…but you never see black dudes with them, it will just be them.

**Interview extract**

People are more likely to socialize with those in their immediate vicinity and by explaining that in his experience shows organized in the coloured suburbs and Mitchell’s Plain were always devoid of ‘black dudes’, SOV demonstrates that the residential separation of races has contributed to the segregation seen in spaces of hip-hop performance. Although there are no longer legislated restrictions on where people can live, residential integration is encumbered by the economic stratification of racial groups, which prevents most black people moving into coloured areas, and most coloureds moving to white neighbourhoods.

In the new South Africa, non-residential public areas, like Long Street in central Cape Town (where most hip-hop performance spaces were located) have opened up and taken on new meanings as ‘cosmopolitan spaces of cultural, racial and ethnic diversity’ (Salo 2003, p. 355). However, this new imagining does not reflect the reality. Long Street had a 6pm curfew for ‘non-Europeans’ during apartheid and while these restrictions have been lifted, processes of gentrification exclude people in new ways. When black and coloured people do make use of central Cape Town they typically go to different bars and when they do go to the same establishments,

22 An area in the Cape Flats where a lot of coloured neighbourhoods are located.
voluntary segregation is enacted as people decline to socialize outside their racial group (Tredoux and Dixon 2009). It has also been shown that when any racial mixing is evident, it is overwhelmingly among the middle classes and excludes much of the population (Nkuna 2006). This social separation works to continue the paranoia and mistrust between groups experienced during apartheid and furthers processes of exclusion and the independence of black and coloured hip-hop communities.

3.2.3. Identity and language

Ethnic population groups in Cape Town are not only differently treated, but they also think of themselves as fundamentally different (Bray et al 2010). This in-group identity has evolved over a long period of time and the following section describes how these separate racial identities, and their accompanying languages, have worked to further divide the people of Cape Town.

The racial category of coloured is unique to South Africa\(^{23}\) and refers to people of mixed ancestry from Europe, Indonesia, Malaya and other areas of Africa. In pre-apartheid Cape Town, a distinctive ‘Cape coloured’ culture and identity emerged as this group began using European measures of success\(^{24}\) (job, education, religion and skin colour) to distance themselves from blacks or ‘natives’ (Adhikari 2002). Consequently, during apartheid, coloureds were given greater privilege by white minority rule and the following quote, by a former minister of justice illustrates how they were socially positioned between ‘civilized’ whites and ‘uncivilized’ blacks.

> In our country we have civilized people, we have semi-civilized people and we have uncivilized people. The Government…gives each section facilities according to the circumstances of each. *Minister of Justice, Mr. Swart (1950)* quoted in Christopher (2001a, p. 5).

While a coloured identity was present before apartheid, the strict segregation of the era facilitated the reification of group identities and created an even stronger out-group aversion (Desai and Maharaj 1996).

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\(^{23}\)This terminology was however also employed in Namibia during South African rule.

\(^{24}\)Manganyi (1991) has described this appropriation of white symbols of respectability as ‘psychological enslavement’.
Black South Africans have an equally strong sense of identity; during apartheid it was used to mobilize support for the ANC, and subsequently the media and a selection of politicians have continued to reinforce it. Former President Mbeki for instance, sought to move beyond the multicultural discourses associated with the Mandela presidency and fervently supported the idea of an ‘African Renaissance’, which aligned itself to black pride and self-reliance (Alexander 2006, p. 40). Voting continues to reflect racial identities and the ANC has achieved continued electoral dominance since 1994 partly through appealing to race and by few political alternatives rising due to the high proportion of black people in the overall population.\textsuperscript{25}

Language is often used as a symbol of group membership (Bekker 2003 p. 65) and although English is used as the lingua franca, racial groups in Cape Town are further separated by their first language. Due to the high number of coloured people in the Western Cape, the most frequent language spoken in the home is Afrikaans and was spoken by 2.3 million people in 2001, this was followed by isiXhosa spoken by 1.1 million and English, spoken by only 875,000 people. The total proportion of the nine official indigenous languages spoken was 25.8%. This contrasts starkly to the situation nationwide where there is far more variety as well as far less Afrikaans\textsuperscript{26} (17.9% nationally compared to 55.3% in the Western Cape) and isiXhosa (17.6% compared to 23.7%) speakers. The following pie charts compare the first language (the language most often spoken in the home) of people in the Western Cape and South African, at the time of the 2001 census.

\textsuperscript{25} For a fuller discussion, see Alexander (2007) and Hart (2002).
\textsuperscript{26} The early setters were Dutch, and Afrikaans developed from dialogues they had with slaves who couldn’t speak perfect Dutch so developed a pigeon version of it, which became the Afrikaans language.
Table 3.5. Distribution of the population by first home language in the Western Cape and South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2007b)

As the tables indicate, there is a lot more language plurality in the country as a whole, than in the Western Cape. People are proud of these languages but as well as being a facet of identity, these differences work to exclude people in more routine ways. For instance, when I spent time with either a group of black and coloured performers, they often spoke English as a courtesy but if left alone they would speak their home languages which they seemed a lot more comfortable with. I could easily see that this
could work as an exclusionary device and discourage meaningful social contact across racial lines.

Although most Cape Town based MCs choose to rhyme in English, a significant number rap in their home language in at least some of their songs. I found that nonstandard accents and languages were used as a way to signify their ethnic and African authenticity as well as indicate their divergence from American and non-Africa rappers (this is explained further in chapter 7). I found that use of home language discouraged black people from listening to coloured hip-hop and vice-versa. During an interview, a coloured MC expressed such a sentiment, explaining that while he likes the sound of some Xhosa hip-hop, his lack of understanding prevents him from listening to it regularly.

Slew Dadda: Xhosa hip-hop? I like the clicks but it just sounds like noise to me brother. 

*Laughs*

**Interview extract**

Black rappers were equally dismissive of Afrikaans hip-hop, for what they saw as good historical reasons. Even though coloured people also represent a previously oppressed group, black MCs confided in me that they were discouraged from trying to understand any songs in Afrikaans because they still regarded it as the ‘language of the oppressor’. Other black performers said they didn’t like Afrikaans hip-hop because they felt the language had a harsh and unpleasant sound.

The significance of language is diminishing however as English is more and more becoming the dominant language in South Africa. While the Xhosa culture and language has shown resilience in the face of colonization and apartheid, in recent years there has been a shift towards speaking English, especially amongst young, well educated people living in urban areas (Ridge 2000, p. 1). There is also evidence that although most coloured people speak Afrikaans as their first language, a growing number of young and middle class members of the community are shifting to English (Dyers 2004). Also suggesting that language is becoming less and less a point of division in the country, Marlin-Curiel has asserted that, ‘the globalization-conscious South African government favours English much as the Black Consciousness
revolutionaries did during the fight against apartheid, as a language of power’ (2003, p. 72).

3.3. Research context

3.3.1. Township life

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, most of my respondents lived in the black and coloured Townships that surround Cape Town. This placed upon them numerous disadvantages but in relation to hip-hop activity, the most prominent of these were geographical isolation, high levels of violence and crime and discrimination from other sectors of society.

The Townships, positioned on the Cape Flats on the outskirts of the city, provide a very visible illustration of the geographical separation of racial groups in this region. Bray et al convincingly argue that ‘the spatial communities in Cape Town [have] a continuing…attribution of a common community identity in juxtaposition to that of other communities’ (2010, p. 312). These group identities are enhanced by their isolation, not only in residence but also in other institutions like schools and churches that are contained within the boundaries of a Township.

As well as contributing to a strong group identity and out-group aversion, this physical separation also hampers people’s hip-hop activities in more practical ways. Central Cape Town is not easily accessible to black and coloured people living on the Cape Flats because it requires long, dangerous and relatively expensive commutes either by train or minibus taxi. This geographical isolation and lack of transport infrastructure means that artists are burdened when having to perform in town or meet up with others who live outside of their community. This creates unique challenges for aspiring musicians, which they often have to be imaginative and resourceful to overcome. These extra barriers to hip-hop production and the ways that they are negotiated are analyzed in more detail in chapter 6.

High levels of crime and violence are a further defining characteristic of Township life. To a large degree, apartheid worked to normalize violence because children
were socialized into a society with brutality in its very core and Motsemme (2007) convincingly argues that apartheid’s ruthless onslaught on the home life of black and coloured people diminished their ability to nurture positive relations. Currently, worrying about crime is almost a national pastime in South Africa and it is an unpleasant fact that it is one of the most violent countries in the world, with the highest per capita rates for rape, assault and firearm murders. In 2001, Cape Town had the highest murder rate in South Africa (82 per 100,000 inhabitants) and an attempted murder rate of 114 per 100,000 inhabitants (Hammett 2007, p. 130). The WCED (Western Cape Education Department) also found that over 800 schools in Cape Town were unsafe for pupils and teachers and this is approximately half of the total number (Kassiem 2005).

In the region, crime and violence is highly concentrated within Townships and the City of Cape Town (2005a) found that among shack dwellers, 90% felt unsafe living in their area and one third of households had been victims of crime in the previous year. Only one third of these were reported to the police and in 86% of crimes reported, no arrests were made. The report also found that robbery was a frequent occurrence for those living in Townships, accounting for 88% of total crime, with assault at 10%27 (City of Cape Town 2005a, p. 71) and the number of serious crimes committed like rape, carjacking, serious assault, housebreaking and robbery have all grown since 1996 (Grimond 2001, p. 7). My methodology chapter details some of the strategies I adopted in negotiating this dangerous environment but it was not such an easy task for my informants who by spending their lives in these areas could not easily exclude themselves from the dangers and during fieldwork a large proportion of my sample experienced robbery, sometimes at gunpoint. Others were reluctant to leave their homes after dark or travel on trains to or from Townships. The crime and violence in these neighbourhoods therefore worked to further separate Township residents from people living in other areas of the city.

Fuelled by popular representations (e.g. the 2005 film Tsotsi) and as a consequence of crime being concentrated in these areas, in South Africa, the criminal is constructed as a non-white, young, male Township dweller. This popular sentiment gives rise to discriminatory practices and many of my informants articulated frustration in not

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27 ‘Assault’ includes figures for hold-ups at gunpoint/knifepoint, shootings, stabbings and rape.
being afforded the same opportunities in gaining employment as equally unqualified and inexperienced people living in other areas of the city. Others found it difficult in hiring city venues in order to stage hip-hop shows and to be taken seriously by commercial and non-commercial organizations when applying for sponsorship. Spurred on in part, by the abundance of rags-to-riches stories prevalent in mainstream hip-hop and as a combination of the limited opportunities found in their neighbourhoods and the discriminatory practices of others, heads living in Townships were more likely to take their hip-hop endeavours seriously and seek to make a career out of this artistic practice. For many, even when financial gain proved elusive, they were encouraged to pursue hip-hop because of its potential to bestow symbolic capital and gain credibility amongst their peers.

3.3.2. Being young in Cape Town

Most of the sample in this research were young: only 7 were over 30 and 60 were under this age. It is therefore important to include a discussion of the unique place this group holds in South African society. In this I include a consideration of levels of educational attainment and the emergence of a small number of ‘black diamonds’, whom are defined as young people from previously disadvantaged groups who have benefited significantly since the fall of apartheid.

In South Africa, young people (those aged 24 and under) represent more than 50 per cent of the entire population28 (Umrabulo 2006) and this group distinguishes itself from youths in other countries by their strong sense of agency and self-reliance, which is inherited from their central role in the struggle against apartheid (Soudien 2007). It is widely agreed that young people led the 1976 uprisings29 and most regard their contribution to the resistance movement as critical. Worden for instance asserts that it provided the final nail in apartheid’s coffin and ‘revealed the failure of non-violent resistance and forced a new approach from opponents of apartheid’ (1994, p. 107). According to Motsemme, this pivotal role separated young people from their elders and destroyed the authority of parents as the young lost respect for the ‘pitiful

28 This is common to a lot of developing countries.
29 This rebellion is acknowledged and commemorated annually on Youth Day, which is a national holiday on 16 June.
survival strategies of their fathers’ (2007, p. 69). Although most of my participants were too young to participate directly in the resistance movement, this sense of independence and empowerment among the young has continued to resonate. This sense of agency and self-reliance struck me as a defining characteristic of my research sample and revealed itself in the strong entrepreneurial disposition they showed with regards to hip-hop activities.

Despite these descriptions of the post democracy youth as independent and self-reliant, the South African media often label them as the ‘lost generation’ in arguing that the political conflict, poor schooling and disrupted family life has adversely affected their ability to create healthy social relationships and proceed positively in social life (Seekings 1995). Similarly, the rhetoric emanating from the ANC regularly articulates the potential dangers posed by alienated youth (Seekings 1996). There is a strong contradiction however, between the dominant views of the media and the ruling party and how young people regard themselves. A national survey revealed that young people were quite socially active in civil society with a majority either going to church or participating in organized sporting activity; most were also shown to be both positive and ambitious (CASE 1993). Large-scale research has complemented this outlook, acknowledging that youths confront a range of problems but also stating that it is not a crisis in the way it is often described (Van Zyl Slabbert et al 1994, p. 26). My fieldwork experiences correspond to this and I discovered that positive social relationships involving a high degree of gifting and reciprocity surrounded the hip-hop scene. I also found my sample, despite the hardship and disadvantageous circumstance they found themselves in, to be motivated, determined and optimistic towards their artistic endeavours and their future success as musicians.

Compared to European and American standards, education in Cape Town is extremely poor. In 2000 the education minister gave a pessimistic summary of educational facilities, admitting that 30 per cent of the country’s schools were unfit for use, 40 per cent did not have water and 50 per cent did not have electricity (Grimond 2001). A wide-ranging Cape Town study also found that formal education levels were generally very low, with only 16% of adults attaining matric30, among the unemployed, only 1.6% had matric and one quarter of adult residents had only

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30 In South Africa, matric or matriculation refers to the final school leaving exams, which act as the minimum university entrance requirements.
primary schooling as their highest level of education (City of Cape Town 2005b p. 19). The report also found anecdotal evidence that a large number of children were not attending school at all31. Through spending time with hip-hop musicians, I discovered that the poor educational levels of many of my respondents discouraged them from applying to funding councils or negotiating recording and distribution deals with musical enterprises because of the paperwork involved.

Like other areas of social life, education in South Africa is largely stratified along race lines. The main historical cause of this was the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which although bringing universalized education for black children, also made attendance non-compulsory and provided facilities which were deeply inferior to those offered to white and coloured children. Although state education spending is no longer stratified in this way, educational attainment is. The best schools are found in middle class areas and the wealthiest are able to send their children to private schools. The legacy of apartheid also means that black households are less able to provide an academically supportive environment.

A small number of young black and coloured people however, have benefited significantly in the post apartheid era through Affirmative Action (AA) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies instigated by the ANC government as a way to create a more representative distribution of the population in employment (Alexander 2007). Although black and coloured people are both able to benefit from these policies, it was hoped that they would create a more representative distribution of the black population of the Western Cape in employment (Alexander 2007) because, as a consequence of the Coloured Labour Preference Policy (CLPP) of the apartheid era, coloured people remain over-represented in skilled occupations.

These policies have not been as wide-ranging as many had hoped and have failed to make a significant impact in redressing levels of inequality with only a relative few have benefited from them. Those who have benefited and others who have joined the middle classes since the fall of apartheid have been labelled ‘black diamonds’ and while these so-called ‘black diamonds’ made up only a small number of research

31 This was not asked as part of the survey but the three main reasons for this was given as: lack of required birth certificates; discrimination by schools against children originating from poor rural areas and extreme poverty where parents or caregivers did not buy the clothes or shoes for children to attend school.
informants, they were influential because they commanded important resources such as home studios and industry contacts that others wanted access to. I found considerable resentment from other black people towards this group and an absence of the solidarity I witnessed between other research informants.

There has also been evidence that this legislation has worked to increase tensions between racial groups and reinforced stereotypes, prejudices and negative attitudes (Erasmus 2005; Pickel 1997; Moodley and Adam 2000). Corin describes the situation thus:

In the new South Africa, a small number of ‘representatives’ enjoy new powers and privileges on behalf of the historically disadvantaged majority. This gives us an elite politics of racialised self-righteousness (2006, p. 51).

Part of this resentment derives from black and coloured people competing over who qualifies for the benefits of BEE\(^{32}\) policies (Ramphele 2001; Nattrass and Seekings 2001) and Christopher has argued that the resilience in legislation of the use of racial categories as a necessary way to enact AA policies has been the main cause of blocking Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s dream of a ‘rainbow nation’ that is peacefully multi-cultural and multi-racial (2001b: 450).

### 3.3.3. Gender

During fieldwork, I had prolonged ethnographic contact with 62 males but only 5 females and this uneven sample broadly reflects the composition of the Cape Town hip-hop scene. I found it to be an extremely masculine world, made up of a complex web of male friendship networks that females were largely absent from. The competitive aspects, like the practice of ‘battling’, the male dominance of hip-hop globally (Rose 1994, p. 146-82) and the paternal, sexist, often misogynistic messages found in the music (bell hooks 1994) goes some way to explain the imbalance. However, there are other reasons why the division is so pronounced in Cape Town and I argue that the prevalence of traditional gender roles, sexual power imbalances

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\(^{32}\) The government enacted black economic empowerment through the Affirmative Procurement Policy, which allocated all government contracts under R2, million to firms owned by disadvantaged groups. Economic empowerment has been limited to a few beneficiaries.
and the gendered division of public spaces contribute significantly to the absence of females performers amongst my research population.

South Africa has the most liberally progressive constitution in the world, enshrining gender equality in law, and while this development has had the effect of empowering some women (Strebel et al 2006), popular responses have been extremely conservative and the country as a whole remains highly patriarchal (Robins 2006, p. 150). Gender inequality remains firmly entrenched with women a lot more likely to live in poverty and gain fewer educational qualifications than men (Walker 2005). This inequality can partially be explained with reference to the traditional gender roles that prevail in South Africa and which govern norms of masculinity and femininity. Writing specifically about Cape Town, Strebel et al found that the pervasiveness of these conventions involve:

Women staying at home to raise the family and men going out to work to provide for the family. In addition women were expected by men to be submissive to their husbands, and men were expected to be the decision-makers (2006, p. 517).

Although not commenting on music-making activities, Pelak (2005) and Roberts (1992) have shown that the unequal division of household labour helps explain why there are so few South African women taking part in organized sport. Loots (2003), in her study of breakdancing in Cape Town had similar findings, concluding that females are a lot less likely to enter public space than males and when they do, they tend to adopt a passive role.

The rape trial of President Jacob Zuma and the public’s response illustrates that these gender issues intersect with the subject of race. In his defence, Zuma’s lawyers repeatedly drew upon African traditionalist idioms and ‘cultural rules’ to argue that the sex had been consensual. Many people were appalled at what was perceived to be a cynical tactic and the trial showed that traditional black masculinity is in tension with the views of large portions of the non-black South African population (Robins 2006).

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33 This harsh and unfair reality has recently fuelled a wide-ranging national debate (e.g. Lemon 2001; McFadden 1992; Seidman 1999).
34 Worryingly, Zuma knew that the accuser was HIV positive but believed that having a shower after sex would prevent him from becoming infected.
Traditional gender roles among the black population have gestated over a long period of time. Before colonialism, the bride-wealth system and a clear gendered division of labour characterized black society and during apartheid, husbands and sons were moved in great numbers through the migrant labour system, leaving women the ‘most overburdened sector of the labour force and the product of an enduring chauvinist tradition’ (Zegeye and Maxted 2002, p. 37). This chauvinist tradition is keenly felt by the few female hip-hop practitioners in Cape Town, and in private conversations with them, they often complained that they were overtly discriminated against and if they were ever complemented for their rapping ability, it was always qualified with ‘for a woman’.

These traditional norms of masculinity contribute to power imbalances with regards to sex and a high rate of violence against women. Globally, South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against females, with over 53,000 cases of rape reported to police in 2000 and 123 women reporting rape or attempted rape per 100,000 of the population (United Nations 2003). In addition, Jewkes and Abrahams (2003) report that the rate of rape in the Western Cape is among the highest in South Africa.

Sexual power imbalances are linked to this violence and Wood et al found that while multiple partnerships are condoned and even encouraged for men, women are expected to be monogamous and unquestioning of their partner’s behaviour. The authors showed in a study of young people in a Xhosa township that there is ‘pervasive male control over almost every aspect of [women’s] early sexual experiences’ (1998, p. 234). MacPhail and Campbell (2001) also found that when young females refuse sex, they are often accused of infidelity and risk violence. Reflecting on her experiences of Cape Town hip-hop, MC Buni in an interview with the Sunday Tribune said that the theme of sexuality is always evoked when people discuss her group’s success:

We work hard, we sacrifice a lot you know – family, friends, partying, everything, and work on this shit so that we can be successful. But a lot of males think that because we’re women, we’re using our sexuality to get somewhere and that’s just not so.

35 It is also widely recognized that these figures greatly underestimate the problem as a large number of these crimes go unreported.

As a consequence of the violence directed towards women, young females often remove themselves from public spaces (Klooper 2000, p. 190) and by virtue of this, they also exclude themselves from many of the arenas of hip-hop socialization. Unlike formal musical instruction, the intention is not to learn music per se but through a plethora of complementary practices and just ‘hanging-out’ people learn about the music, listen to the music and make music. Listening, practicing and performing all happen simultaneously and learning essentially is closely tied to all social activities. As well as being places for hip-hop socialization, it is within public spaces that performances are enacted and a lot of networking and collaborative projects are coordinated. Females are further excluded as many of these activities are also linked to alcohol consumption because in South Africa, drinking is a fundamental part of the definition of a sociable person and although women enjoy a drink in private, the public consumption of alcohol is predominately a male activity (Green 1999).

3.4. Pursuing hip-hop in Cape Town

3.4.1. The musical and cultural industries

The musical and cultural environment that Cape Town artists find themselves in has been shaped over time by a multitude of factors. The most significant of these have been the experiences of colonialism and apartheid and more recently, the growing influence of the global media.

Cape Town has a long history of encountering Western popular music (Mhlambi 2004) and hip-hop was not the first to become fashionable in the region. The tradition began when English colonialists introduced minstrel shows to the city in 1850, causing local popular culture to closely resemble America’s (Martin 1999). This new form of music did not influence racial groups equally as black people largely ignored it while coloureds embraced it warmly, eventually working to transform its style to

37 Mfecane’s (2002) research on masculinity in Soweto showed that in this setting men who do not drink, smoke and hang out with other men are referred to in belittling and insulting terms.
create a unique South African urban tradition (Erlmann 1991). This difference in musical appropriation continues to resonate with hip-hop and while being received positively among all groups, there have been significant differences in application between black and coloured practitioners, which are discussed further in the next section.

The import of jazz music further familiarized Capetonians with American music but unlike minstrelsy, became popular with both blacks and coloureds (Miller 2007, p. 136). During the 1930s, coloured musicians monopolized the circuit and their performances were enjoyed by multiracial audiences (Coplan 1985) but by the 1940s and 1950s, the amount of black performers increased dramatically (Miller 2007) and Abrahams argues that this was because they began seeing similarities between themselves and African-Americans. The author notes:

Both groups were part of a rapid urbanisation of unskilled labour necessary for the development of industry. Both lived under oppressive conditions, and although black Americans were in the minority while their South African counterparts were in the majority, South Africans came to identify with the sound created by Americans – firstly, just as audiences throughout the world had, and then on a deeper level as they explored common socio-economic realities (2003, p. 14).

Local jazz artists were originally expected to act as ‘cover bands’ and mimic well-established American acts but eventually audiences sought to hear music that they could call their own and this prompted musicians to create a synthesis of Jazz and marabi music that they called ‘tsaba-tsaba’ (Abrahams 2003). Most audiences at this time were mixed but the formulation of apartheid created an environment where musicians could only gain popularity within their own ethnic group (Boloka 2003, p. 257). The most influential legislation in this regard were the Group Areas Act of 1966 which prohibited mobility outside designated racial areas, and the Publication and Entertainment Act of 1963 which prevented racial groups from associating or collaborating ‘outside working hours and working relationships’ (Kavanagh 1985, p. 51). These laws coupled with pressure from white musicians removed black

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38 This type of performance was integrated into early Coon carnivals in Cape Town and as the number of coloured minstrel troupes rose, so did their popularity with audiences in the Western Cape (Miller 2007, p. 136). When the black American performer Orpheus McAdoo toured and played in Cape Town in 1892, he was regarded as a hero and the embodiment of what a non-white man in another country could achieve (Ballantine 1997, p. 4).

39 Ballantine (1997) describes the immense popularity of Jazz at this time as the most astonishing feature of South African black culture.
commercial performance spaces completely and rendered Cape Town venues ‘black-
free’ (Coplan 1985, p. 51). The black music scene further deteriorated during this time as many gifted musicians either retired or like Abdullah Ibrahim40, went into political exile (Coplan 1985, p. 192), causing an absence of mentors for subsequent generations of musical performers.

Apartheid policies also had a huge effect on the media environment because TV and radio during this period were explicitly used to legitimize racist policies and the ideology of separation (Zegeye 2001, p. 1). In 1960, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) created separate radio stations that broadcasted regionally for the various ethnic groups and this worked to differentiate musical tastes between racial groups further.

The media environment fundamentally changed after apartheid because there was a concerted effort by broadcasters to be representative of the population they served and increase the presence of black people on TV (Barnes 2003). During this period, programming in African languages also increased while programmes in Afrikaans were cut dramatically (Teer-Tomaselli 2008). These developments meant that black musical artists were given greater exposure and, for the first time, ‘could make their voices heard’ (Mhlambi 2004, p. 116). However, despite these positive changes, the media since 1994 has been widely criticised. Wasserman (2006, p. 77) for instance has argued that the forces of deregulation and liberalization have led it to represent sectional and tribal interests over national ones and privilege white viewpoints and experiences. Former presidents Mandela (1994)41 and Mbeki (2003) have also articulated the belief that portions of the media continue to reinforce colonial stereotypes of black people.

A further development has been the emergence of digital satellite (DSTV) that now broadcasts a wide range of private stations across South Africa. DSTV broadcasts eight music channels (Channel O; MTV Europe; MTV Base; VH1; MK; Trace TV; AfroMusic and One Gospel) and the most relevant of these in terms of hip-hop are Channel O, MTV Base Africa and MTV Europe. Channel O is the only one based in

40 A legendary pianist and composer from Cape Town who moved to Europe in 1962.
41 In particular Mandela (1994) attacked the white middle class for their monopoly in the ownership and editorship of the media.
South Africa and it plays a wide variety of music but most prominent is kwaito and hip-hop. MTV Europe plays a wide variety of mainly international artists but MTV Base Africa has a commitment to broadcast a large amount of African music and primarily focuses on R’n’B, hip-hop, reggae, soul and urban. Although these outlets have the potential to give people greater access to international and national music, we should be careful not to overestimate their role because due to the high levels of inequality in South Africa, DSTV is largely ‘the preserve of a relative few’ (Nyamnjoh 2005, p. 22) and in a given week only reaches a maximum of a million people (Teer-Tomaselli 2008, p. 86-87).

The main media outlet that local artists can make use of are Cape Town’s community radio stations, especially Bush Radio which originally broadcasted (illegally) in 1992 and UCT Radio which is a campus station operated predominantly by students at the University of Cape Town. Although there are commercial stations (the most popular is Good Hope FM), these are usually reluctant to give local unsigned acts airplay and exposure. The community stations however, regularly invite local hip-hop artists into their studios for interviews and live performances.

A further outlet local artists make use of is the print media. Like radio stations, the majority of magazines focus on mainstream acts, overwhelmingly based in Johannesburg, but HYPE magazine, devoted solely to hip-hop, which began in 2004 and has a circulation of 125,000, does provide coverage of some of the musicians I encountered during fieldwork. Every month, the publication dedicates at least two pages to covering the city’s scene and often these are supplemented with interviews and album reviews of local artists. It also offers unsigned MCs, crews and DJs the opportunity to reach a wide audience and a unique platform to showcase their skill by giving away a free compilation CD with each issue.

The international music industry is dominated by six multinationals that have subsidiaries in the majority of the world’s major music markets. Of these six companies, BMG, EMI, Polygram and Sony have South African subsidiaries and like most media outlets in the country, all are based in Johannesburg. During fieldwork, many artists articulated their frustration with this and used it to account for their lack of success in getting signed or receiving wider media exposure. Signing to a major label in South Africa is desirable because on their own, artists do not have the power
to market and distribute music effectively and invest in professional recording sessions and the filming of music videos. There are a handful of independent labels in Cape Town (Insidious records, African Dope and Pioneer Unit) but out of these Pioneer Unit is the only one that releases a large amount of hip-hop music (5 albums a year) but it has found it difficult to market and distribute music outside of Cape Town.

In South Africa, the growing problem of music piracy has greatly reduced consumers’ expenditure on music (Enders 2002, p. 2) and this has caused the music industry to be more reluctant to invest significant resources in the development and promotion of the nation’s artists. This has affected hip-hop more than other genres because piracy is influenced by socio-economic factors and most consumers of this music in South Africa are poor and black. Due to the general clandestine nature of these crimes, the collection of accurate data is inherently difficult but the level is understood to be high compared to other countries and the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) has recommended that South Africa be placed on the ‘Priority Watch List’ (IIPA 2003, p. 271).

Cape Town hip-hop artists also find it difficult to make money from public performances in the city’s venues. Most of the venues that operate in the centre of town are small, independently run enterprises and while they often hire DJs to perform, they are most likely to play music other than hip-hop (predominantly, house and dubstep music). This is because owners feel the audiences of these musical genres are more willing and capable to pay high cover charges and if MCs want to perform in these areas they often have to hire the venue and publicise the event themselves which most find prohibitively expensive.

The previous chapter contained a discussion on the production of culture perspective that focuses on how ‘symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the system within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved’ (Peterson and Anand 2004, p. 311). This viewpoint illustrates the importance of providing a consideration of the musical and cultural environment to partially account for the type of music Cape Town’s hip-hop artists produce. The environment I have described meant that the musicians I studied were more likely to work outside of the commercial sector and consequentially the scene in the city is widely described as
‘underground’. In this reality, artists are more likely to seek a local following as a viable fan base and be more committed to rhyme in isiXhosa and Afrikaans that is not as widely spoken outside of the Western and Eastern Cape provinces. The independent labels in the city are more likely to cater for niche markets and have an experimental, non-formulaic sound than others in more commercial centres like Johannesburg. A further consequence of the local industry is that local artists are motivated to seek opportunities further afield and seek to instigate collaborative projects with people outside of Cape Town, both nationally and internationally.

3.4.2. The hip-hop movement

Cape Town is regarded as the birthplace of the South African hip-hop movement and although rapping is now by far the most important aspect, breakdancing and graffiti were the first elements to be appropriated in the region. Ariefdien and Abrahams (2006) have accounted for the lack of penetration of the musical side of hip-hop with reference to the to the difficulty and cost in locating American music during the economic and political sanctions of the apartheid era.

From the 1980s, breakdancing became popular in coloured areas of the Cape Flats and several b-boy crews emerged, originally at least, it did not spread among black people. Klopper provides an explanation for this:

"Poverty coupled with the slowness with which electricity has been introduced into South Africa’s black townships, has prevented black youths from becoming active consumers of video which are (and always have been) the main source of information for South Africa’s self-taught hip-hop artists and breakdancers (2000, p. 182)."

During this period, there was an immense amount of organized resistance to apartheid in Cape Town and although graffiti was used to express opposition to apartheid (Klopper 2000), community leaders did not want to incorporate hip-hop into oppositional politics because it was regarded as a ‘counterrevolutionary tool of U.S. cultural imperialism’ (Ariefdien and Abrahams 2006, p. 265). This was despite the fact that U.S. gospel songs like ‘We Shall overcome’ were regularly sung at political gatherings.
Hip-hop in the United States at this time was closely aligned to Black Nationalism, black consciousness and pan-Africanism. For instance one of the early pioneers of hip-hop Afrika Bambatta, founded an organization called the Universal Zulu Nation that embraced the central elements of Garveyism\(^{42}\). For this reason, Klopper argues that hip-hop in Cape Town bears comparison, with 1950s Sophiatown, where ‘cosmopolitan’ aesthetic forms were used to focus and articulate local expressions of resistance (2000, p.181). For this reason Nkonyeni has voiced surprise that the government allowed even a limited amount hip-hop music in the country, given their close monitoring of the media (2007, p. 158). Part of this can be explained by the way it entered the country through unorthodox channels and the fact that many people at the time, including the government presumably, treated hip-hop as a passing fad. They also may have misunderstood or have been completely ignorant of the subversive messages in rap music.

Due to the relative long history of hip-hop in Cape Town, heads can more easily align themselves to the ‘old school’ that is also in opposition to commercial/mainstream styles (Krims 2000, p. 55-6). Because it emerged at a time of large-scale social resistance, the scene has had a continued political integrity compared to what is often seen as the demise of American hip-hop into commercial party music. One local MC describes this by comparing Cape Town hip-hop to the US hip-hop in the 1990s.

El Nino: Ah…basically, we are what they were back in the 90’s, you know. We are on that level, when it was highly driven by the culture and it wasn’t about the money or anything. It was just people connecting for the love of the music, so…we are on that level now, yeah.

**Informal conversation**

In the late 1980s, the first MCs emerged with two coloured crews, POC (Prophets of da City) and BVK (Brasse Vannie Kaap) gaining national notoriety. These groups innovated the use of the Afrikaans language in hip-hop (Magubane 2004) and pursued community development projects and a politically conscious agenda (Haupt 2001). Between 1990 and 1994 some clubs in central Cape Town (Club Tzers, Matinee club and The Base) emerged that played hip-hop, for the first time providing a performance space for heads outside of the Cape Flats.

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\(^{42}\) Founded by Marcus Garvey, Garveyism is an aspect of black nationalism that espouses self reliance and the unification of Africans worldwide.
The evolution of hip-hop in Cape Town is generally described as passing through two generations; these are articulated locally as the ‘old school’ and ‘new school’. Badsha (2003) compares old school and new school hip hop heads and suggest that the latter have compromised themselves politically and that these two groups are split along coloured (older, more skilled heads) and white (middle and upper class youths) lines. Other writers on Cape Town hip-hop have noted its fractured nature (Nkonyeni 2007; Watkins 2001) and described this difference as generational with young coloured men from the Cape Flats being the first to appropriate hip-hop in the 1980s and black people taking it up separately in the 1990s. Some authors such as Allen (2004) have argued that there was a shift in post apartheid youth musical cultures in South Africa that saw them move away from serious political issues and towards enjoying the hard earned freedoms that their new democracy guaranteed.

It is important to locate hip-hop in South Africa with reference to the background of kwaieto music. In Johannesburg, the music genre of kwaieto has become popular in Johannesburg, and similarly to hip-hop, articulates social concerns (Swartz 2003; Steingo 2005). Kwaieto emerged during the 1990s and is a mixture of several musical genres including pop, hip-hop, reggae and house (Allen 2004). There have been regular comparisons made between hip-hop and kwaieto (Allen 2004; Swartz 2003) and some authors have gone as far to assert that kwaieto is the South African version of hip-hop (Swartz 2003; Magubane 2006). In comparing the two types of music Swartz (2003) concluded that Kwaieto did not constitute South African hip-hop but rather a local form of music that has evolved separately by young people in the country. However, Swartz (2003) does acknowledge the similarities between the two, especially the way they both are utilized as agents of identity and empowerment.

Magubane (2004) diagnoses the fundamental difference between the two genres to be their relationship to American culture. According to the author hip-hop evolved as the music of the underprivileged minority who were not averse to fusing it with American culture, while kwaieto is identified as the music of the underprivileged majority who are reluctant to identify with American hip-hop culture. Compared to kwaieto music, South African hip-hop is relatively uncommercialized and it is difficult for artists to make a living from it.
3.4.3. Communication

“South Africa” is a deceptive name, one that reveals the country’s geographical location while hinting only vaguely at the specific identity which might separate it from the rest of the continent. Yet South Africa is very defiantly a place apart. Its frontiers have always, quite literally, bristled…Few other countries of the mainland have been made to masquerade as an island for such a long period of time; and few islands have found themselves so geographically isolated. But it is within South Africa itself that the harshest frontiers have been drawn (Hirson and Trump 1994, p. 2).

In this quote Hirson and Trump (1994) highlight how South Africa has historically been a closed and isolated space with regards to the outside and the separation within it. In South Africa, the emergence of Internet use has coincided with the transition to democracy and this section describes how the development and proliferation of the Internet and the mobile phone have enhanced people’s abilities to communicate with other both inside and outside of the country and also enhance the ability of hip-hop musicians to conduct various entrepreneurial and organization activities.

Mobile phones have overtaken landlines as the most common mode of voice communication and their use has grown most markedly in developing countries. Over the past decade, South Africa has seen a rise from 18% to 60% of people over sixteen owning their own mobile phone (Research ICT Africa [RIA] 2009), in large part this climb has occurred because of the fall in the cost of handsets and the growing popularity of prepaid options (Hodge 2005). It has been shown that the poor have been willing to spend high portions of their income on this type of communication (Zainudeeen et al 2006).

Computer and Internet use has not been as widespread and research has shown that while 15% of households in South Africa have a working computer; only 5% have an Internet connection (RIA 2009). Although there have been numerous governmental initiatives to create greater access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Lewis 2007), access to the Internet remains monopolized by a small elite (Bracey and Culver 2005) and this ‘digital divide’ has created a form of ‘technological apartheid’ (Castells 2000, p. 93) where personal computer ownership and Internet connection in the home is mainly the preserve of the white population. This technological inequality is further compounded by the education gap where the
vast majority of schools do not have access to computers or the Internet and those that do offer little more than ‘drill-and-practice’ lessons (Prinsloo and Walton 2008). White youth are therefore enjoying the duel advantage of exposure to rich media environments both at school and in their home. In an interview, a record company owner describes how although mobile phones have become widespread, a lot of the artists he deals with cannot afford to put credit on their phone.

DPlanet: Just a lack of being able to get hold of people. Just basic stuff like they don’t have anything… No one’s got money on their phone.

Interview extract

It should be made explicit here that figures authors use to address mobile phone use and Internet access are usually provided by household surveys (RIA 2009) and give an unsophisticated picture of use and that figures about ownership can be rather misleading because they fail to acknowledge that people often use a mobile phone even if they don’t own one themselves (Vodafone 2005). Similarly, the popularity of cheap Internet cafes in Cape Town has meant that people have access (although not on a continuous basis) even when they do not own their own computer. In the following extract, Damien voices his frustration that a journalist couldn’t get hold of one of his artists because he didn’t own a computer so couldn’t respond to messages posted on his myspace account:

Damien: They had the review in the back [of the magazine] and said, ‘we can’t get hold of him, the phone’s off, his Myspace is down’. That’s so typical, they wanted to do a piece on him and the only thing they could put in the piece was about how they can’t get hold of him. It’s impossible to get hold of him. It really is impossible. I’ve even got his home number and he’s never there.

Informal conversation

It is important to avoid ideas of technological determinism, which asserts that the availability of these technologies will bring a determined result. However it is true that computers and mobile phones can be used in numerous ways, bringing in particular a new range of possibilities for personal networking and communication. For instance, during fieldwork I observed these forms of communication provide a tool for artists’ entrepreneurial activities by either advertising gigs cheaply or providing a platform to promote themselves in either personal web pages or on social
network sites like myspace and facebook (this dimension of entrepreneurship, or ‘hustling’ is explored further in chapter 6). The Internet also provides young hip-hop heads in Cape Town the opportunity to connect with others all over the world that share an interest in hip-hop, giving people the ability to enter into collaborative projects that transcend proximity. The development and proliferation of mobile phones and the Internet have therefore allowed members to communicate more effectively and cheaply to people within their local hip-hop communities but has also liberated them in developing global musical networks outside the confines of these. The use of these technologies to broaden artistic networks is addressed in chapter 5. During an interview with a member of a local crew, I was amazed to discover that the Internet had allowed him to incorporate other members around the world into his crew:

Gary: So who else is involved in Metalloids?

Arsenic: It’s myself, Arsenic; um Bromine and this guy Selenium. Bromine is working in the States for a while, now but like, when he comes back here he’s sorted you know and then he’s gonna start you know with his production again and stuff, so he’s actually taking a long break from things.

Interview extract

Traditionally, community has been defined as a group of people living in a common location but the development and spread of global communication and transport technologies has greatly reshaped the significance of place (Harvey 1989).

3.5. Concluding comments

This chapter has provided a background to the hip-hop scene found in Cape Town. An understanding of the research sample, the unique urban environment as well as hip-hop’s place within it is necessary in providing a context to the three empirical chapters that are to follow.

The most striking feature of the social landscape of the research site, which carried over to the hip-hop found within it, is the separation of racial groups. The overwhelming majority of my research sample are classified as black or coloured (35
were black, 21 were coloured and 11 were white) and although both groups were disadvantaged and disenfranchised during apartheid, coloured people enjoyed greater privilege. Although fundamental positive changes have occurred since the onset of democracy, racial stratification has carried over with white Capetonians still enjoying greater privilege than coloureds and coloured people enjoying more than blacks. Other legacies of apartheid in this city are the geographical and social separation of races. This means that as well as black and coloured hip-hop activities being isolated from one another, coloured heads pursue them from a standpoint of relative privilege. The difference in identity and language of both groups works to further the disconnection between them.

The overwhelming majority of hip-hop practitioners in Cape Town are young, male and live in Townships and my research sample largely reflects this (62 were male and only 5 were female). The gender imbalance can partially be explained with reference to the masculine and often misogynistic aspects of hip-hop (bell hooks 1994) but also through an understanding of the sexual imbalances found in South African society. A lot of hip-hop socialization and performance takes place within the public space and females are under represented in these spaces because of the unfair division of household labour and the risks posed to them in these places. Living in a Township, like most heads do, restricts them in a number of ways, most notably in their geographical isolation and the discrimination they receive from other sectors of society. South African youth are distinguished by their self-reliance and independence and this helps account for the way under considerably unfavourable circumstances. Heads in Cape Town display a large degree of ingeniousness and resourcefulness in pursuing hip-hop artistic production. This can be accounted for by an examination of the place of youth in South Africa who despite on-going criticism from the media and politicians, are a self-reliant and optimistic group.

One of my respondents astutely observed, ‘hop-hop in Cape Town is big, but big in peoples’ bedrooms’ as a way to articulate that although a lot of people practice hip-hop, there are few lucrative commercial opportunities available. This makes hip-hop an ‘underground’ scene, allowing local heads to distance themselves from the perceived inauthentic tendencies of mainstream hip-hop but also making the prospect of an adequate livelihood through this creative practice difficult. Although unequally
distributed, the development and democratization of communication technologies has had a profound effect on South African society. Hip-hop heads take advantage of the Internet and mobile phones in a range of activities, including publicity, networking and the dissemination of their music.

It is with this background in mind that I turn to the methodological chapter of this thesis.
Chapter 4. Methodology: approaches and compromises in ethnographic fieldwork

4.1. Introduction

In January 2007, I left Newcastle-upon-Tyne and flew to Cape Town, South Africa, to undertake an ethnography on the local hip-hop scene for a period of twelve months. The central purpose of this fieldwork was to elicit the perspectives of a broad and representative sample of heads towards their artistic activities as well as to observe and participate in as many of these as possible. The continued apartheid legacy of geographical separation of racial groups, set out in the previous chapter, meant that the main practical challenge I faced was distributing myself across this sprawling region while manoeuvring between a variety of fieldwork sites. This chapter interrogates the methodological procedures adopted and dilemmas encountered in pursuing this project.

I begin by outlining how I located appropriate fieldwork sites, gained acceptance and established positive relationships with local hip-hop practitioners. This first section continues by describing the varied participatory activities and membership roles (Adler and Adler 1994) I embraced during research, which ranged from passive observer at concerts to eventually becoming a radio show host and confidant to struggling artists. The second part of this chapter explores some of the specific difficulties encountered in pursuing a hip-hop based ethnography in Cape Town. The city’s high levels of crime and violence, especially in the Townships, meant that my presence in many locations brought an element of risk to my personal safety. A further challenge was immersing myself into a musical world which I initially only had an elementary and casual understanding of. The third section details the steps I took in obtaining reliable and accurate data from my informants and then how I approached analysis. Part four focuses upon the ethical dimension of fieldwork. The informal and relaxed research setting and the fact that a proportion of my respondents engaged in deviant activities meant it was often difficult to work within idealized ethical standards of conducting research. While the project demanded that I move between public and private fieldwork sites, I also had to confront the expectation that
researchers should disclose their presence and retrieve informed consent from the people being studied. This section concludes by describing my efforts to achieve a principled research relationship with respondents that went beyond the data collection phase of research. The final part of the chapter provides an epistemological and philosophical reflection of the use of ethnography as the main method of data collection in this project. I approach this by evaluating the type of understanding that is gained by this method and consider the importance of reflexivity and objectivity with particular reference to the research conducted for this thesis.

4.2. Gaining access and acceptance

4.2.1. Accessing hip-hop spaces

My early fieldwork experiences brought challenges in both locating adequate fieldwork sites and also in gaining access to them. One of the central tenets of ethnography according to Gupta and Ferguson (1997) among many others, is the importance of ‘being there’ but, in the case of hip-hop, where is ‘there’? Following on from Marcus (1995), I took a ‘multi-sited’ approach where I allowed the contours of fieldwork sites to emerge as I traced informants from place to place. This was suitable because unlike traditional cultural anthropology, the object of my study was not a fixed geographical locale but a ‘social world’ that was created by a set of common activities and bound together by a network of communications. My choice of fieldwork sites were therefore guided by the movement of participants: where their actions were performed, their ideas articulated, and in other areas where their broader social life enacted.

One of the key considerations in approaching any group for research is the extent to which their setting is open or closed (Bell 1969) because this initially determines the sites a researcher can access. Although employing slightly different terms than Bell (1969), the same dichotomy is evoked by Hammersely and Atkinson (1995) and Lofland and Lofland (1995), who advocate that the fundamental distinction between fieldwork sites are those which are public and those which are private. Initially, I had to be practical in recognizing the places I could access, and to begin with this excluded private and closed spaces (including the private homes of informants and
semi-public meeting places like Township shebeens). Although later, as I gained the acceptance of respondents and more confidence in my own ability to navigate this world, I began to access these as well.

Initially, when I first arrived in Cape Town, I set about scouting for public and open fieldwork sites where I could position myself: places where access was unrestricted and could provide an initial starting point for further exploration of the local hip-hop scene. In this pursuit, I spent daylight hours surveying and cataloguing local graffiti sites and scouting for independent record shops, looked for bars and clubs playing hip-hop music and meticulously searched cafes and shops for flyers and posters advertising hip-hop shows (an example of a flyer I found is displayed below).

Figure 4.1. A flyer advertising a Cape Town hip-hop performance

43 In my first week, the proprietor of one shop (Stephen of Mabu vinyl on Kloof Street), provided useful advice on the music I should be listening to and the people I should be speaking to, in some cases even providing a contact telephone number.
I soon built up a collection of digital photographs of graffiti pieces around town and hip-hop CDs that were produced in Cape Town. While these artefacts were useful, they revealed only residues of hip-hop production and did not bring me closer to people actively engaged in the culture. For this reason, I moved my attention to nightspots (usually bars and clubs) where I could experience hip-hop performed firsthand by MCs, played by DJs and watch enthusiastic audience members listening and dancing to it. Unlike approaching formal gatekeepers that characterizes research on economic and political elites, I had to locate myself within these social settings in order to establish and approach the most relevant informants. Although hip-hop is popular in Cape Town, artists struggle to earn a decent livelihood from it (this topic is explored in chapter 6) and even those who were signed to a record company or had national media coverage were pretty easy to approach and to avoid going through managers and other ‘handlers’.

Following on from Whyte (1995 [1943]) in his study of street corner society, Wolf (1991) in his work on Canadian outlaw motorcycle-gangs and many others, I adopted a ‘hanging around’ approach; shooting pool, sipping beer, listening to hip-hop and talking informally to DJs, bar staff and regulars. DeMunck and Sobo highlight the benefit of this strategy, affirming that it is ‘only through hanging out [that] a majority…get an opportunity to watch, meet, and get to know you’ (1998, p. 41). Whyte however provides a vivid anecdote of how this tactic can also be unpredictable and dangerous:

I approached the group and opened with something like this: ‘Pardon me. Would you mind if I joined you?’ There was a moment of silence while the man stared at me. He then offered to throw me downstairs. I assured him that this would not be necessary and demonstrated as much by walking right out of there without any assistance (1995, p. 289).

This episode highlights that although public sites are open and provide straightforward entrance, they do not automatically provide access to the people within them. Fortunately however, responses directed towards me were generally positive and after initial contact with artists it became a natural progression to exchange phone numbers and agree to meet at another time. I regarded these interactions in public spaces of initiating and nurturing relationships as an initial step
in the process of further immersion and similar to Shaffir et al (1980), my strategies for gaining access to ‘closed’ sites were kept as flexible as possible.

I soon came to realise that bars and clubs were not the focal point for musicians and hip-hop heads I thought they would be. They went to these places occasionally but most of the people attending were just regular young people, having an almost ambivalent attitude to hip-hop. These open sites were invaluable however, in providing ‘a way in’ to the wider culture and my experiences were similar to Peshkin who writes:

> By attending all local football games, other social events, and as many community activities as I thought would welcome me, I meant to become visible and known, and thereby to facilitate my access to other activities and many people I planned to interview (1998, p. 51).

Due to my regular presence at these nightspots I began to get recognised, my Caucasian face and ‘exotic’ accent stood out and over a period of a couple of weeks, networking, making contacts and general interaction became more natural and less forced. It did not take much time before several people learnt the purpose of my stay and introduced me to other hip-hop heads and informed me about upcoming events.

### 4.2.2. ‘Get your haircut and get a job’...and get out of town?: Justifying presence and establishing rapport

During these initial encounters I sometimes faced difficulties in explaining accurately my project and purpose to would-be informants; I particularly found it a challenge to convey academic information to what was a non-academic audience. Many expressed confusion and surprise when I described that I had been sent to the city for a year to study hip-hop. One respondent admiringly remarked: ‘You’ve got a pretty good racket going, Gary’ but another was more resentful, ‘Call this work? Get your haircut and get a job!’ Overall however, my presence prompted interest, curiosity and acceptance, people who helped me explained their openness as a result of being impressed that I had travelled all the way from the UK to understand something they loved. My status as a doctoral candidate from a British University also gave me a form of credibility and joining an artist’s entourage in the short-term seemed to give
them a form of social capital and credibility within local hip-hop cliques. My presence seemed to confirm their own sense of worth and esteem, providing a symbolic benefit in an arena where material ones were few and far between.

Heads in Cape Town often perceived social networking as a part of their broader entrepreneurial activities and regarded their fraternization with me as an extension of this routine activity. As fieldwork progressed and I built up contacts and relationships with important people, like radio hosts and record company bosses, many realised that there was a distinct self-interest in being friendly to me. Others merely drew encouragement that someone was taking a keen interest in their art. I was also exposed to an almost evangelic zeal among heads; keen to reach me and pass on their knowledge of the culture and music they loved. The overwhelming acceptance and positive responses I received early on was often accompanied by support and guidance. People seemed genuinely keen to introduce me to others involved with hip-hop once they knew my interest and this was crucial in me gaining further contacts. The following extract is typical of an introduction I received early on in fieldwork.

Roddy shook hands with Robeat Box and said, ‘Hey you’ve got to meet someone. This is Gary and he’s doing his PhD on hip-hop!’ Robeat seemed excited about the chosen topic of my thesis. We exchanged numbers and agreed to meet for a drink the following day. I thanked Roddy for the introduction and he shrugged, ‘Sure. I know everyone in this town who has anything to do with drugs, pussy, music and motorbikes.’

Fieldwork Diary, 31st January 2007

There were a minority of instances however, when people accused me of ‘academic tourism’ and showed an open hostility toward my project. The following extract highlights such an incident.

At the Mr Devious DVD launch I got chatting with Carwell (a.k.a. Scar, Agent Black and member of The Wildlife Society crew), an MC who I had known since my early days in Cape Town. Carwell introduced me to a singer who had set up her own record company (Insidious Records) on the Cape Flats. We got talking and after a while, her boyfriend joined us. He seemed a little inebriated and looked like he wasn’t having a good time. He asked me what I was doing in South Africa and I told him researching hip-hop as part of my studies. He declared rather abruptly that: ‘we’ve had people like you here before who make all kinds of promises and never live up to them’. I tried not to be too defensive and said that I haven’t promised
anything and asked who had made these phony assurances. He said journalists had come over from the US and had promised to send copies of their articles but never did. After we talked for a while, he appeared to calm down a bit and I seemed to win him over, he even asked for my number so we could chat over these issues further. Quite a turn around I thought! After moving on, Carwell told me not to worry about that guy because ‘everybody at the launch knows he’s a complete asshole’.

Fieldwork Diary, 14th March 2007

I had expected to get hostility from a local hip-hop activist called Emile YX from the Black Noise crew, who is widely acknowledged as a ‘godfather’ of South African hip-hop, after I read this passage in his book: ‘Their [sic] are so many students or scholars doing their thesis on hip-hop, that even that has become a cliché. They write without passion and end up quoting each other instead of the source. They write for the elite and not the masses that hip hop was meant for’ (Jansen 2003, p. 9). Emile sells copies of this publication himself, for R70, and I initially met him when buying a copy at a hip-hop event. Reading the text carefully had made me apprehensive about our next encounter but these worries proved unfounded and throughout fieldwork, I enjoyed productive conversations with him, finding him generally friendly, if a little aloof.

When progressing from these public spaces and a ‘hanging around’ approach to gradually spending more and more time with respondents as they went about their daily routines a high value was placed on my personality, trustworthiness and sense of humour. In an initial meeting with a local crew called Phase 4, beer had been drunk so spirits were high and I had to prove I could take a joke as the others made fun of my London accent. The cordiality and affability I achieved eventually led, over some weeks for this group to treat me like an insider and just ‘one of the boys’.

I had also to discriminate carefully between the informants I pursued and those I stayed away from. Agar (1980) highlights the significance in selecting valuable informants and avoiding ‘deviants’, those on the periphery of the culture providing erroneous views and ‘professional stranger handlers’. I was mindful of these potential pitfalls and because I was an outsider, I had to use my best judgement in instigating relationships with people who had the potential to be valuable informants. A plethora of classic ethnographies have demonstrated how key informants can smooth access
for researchers. In pursuing his study, Whyte met such an individual called ‘Doc’ who after gaining an appreciation of the research, felt motivated to help and facilitated further immersion. Doc is reported as saying: ‘You tell me what you want to see, and we’ll arrange it’ (1995 [1943], p. 303). Similarly, Patrick (1973) enjoyed an equally fruitful relationship with ‘Tim’ in his study of violent Glaswegian gangs.

My experiences of ethnography provided me with a handful of these ‘key informants’, who could be drawn upon throughout my time in Cape Town. In a study of a group of Sheffield United football hooligans called the Blades, Armstrong established similar research relationships:

There was never one particular informant; rather, there were many Blades I could ring up and meet at any time, who were part of the core and would always welcome a beer and a chat about ‘it’, or tell me who I ‘ought to ’ave a word wi’ (1993, p. 24-25).

As I progressed, I began to possess a broad range of respondents, knowing them in a way that most university department members know one another: some were good friends, some I knew quite well and others just in passing. The research process became a highly proactive experience as fostering these relationships, gave me certain key informants who were well connected, providing a short cut into the culture and a passport into the wider hip-hop community.

These informants, often artists who had been performing for years and had people’s respect, gave me credibility amongst others and assisted my ability to manoeuvre in other hip-hop cliques, allowing me to instigate snowball sampling. I began to get exposed to the wider scene by having respondents I could call upon to fill gaps in my knowledge through in-depth conversations in naturalized settings. My presence in music venues soon led to informal daytime meetings and invitations to more intimate, private and domestic contexts like peoples’ homes to witness first hand them rehearsing material or practicing freestyles and battles.

It should be noted here that although I employ the term ‘informant’, as do a host of ethnographers, the era of reflexivity includes critiques of the unproblematic usage of this vocabulary. This is because of its connotations of unequal and extractive relationships and the more colloquial connotations of police informants and a ‘betrayal’ of secrets. Many ethnographers today, prefer the use of the term ‘research
collaborator’ instead (Ferrano 2006, p. 108). This term gives more attention to how the researcher’s own personality combines with their informants’ to produce ethnographic data. However, these approaches have also come under criticism by others who argue that these postmodern perspectives deny the possibility that ethnography can still provide objective descriptions of other cultures (Harris 1999).

4.2.3. Getting involved: identifying appropriate sites and negotiating roles in the field

It is highly desirable for the participant observer to perform multiple roles during the course of a project, and gain at least a comfortable degree of rapport, even intimacy, with the people, situations and settings of the research (Jorgensen 1989, p. 21).

An important feature when attending fieldwork sites is the degree to which ethnographic engagement is active or passive (Van Maanen 1978) (although for most, particularly over a year’s fieldwork, it’s both active and passive) and some authors have conceptualized frameworks to describe a researcher’s engagement in the field. Spradley for instance, describes four types of ethnographic involvement ranging from non-participation to complete participation (1980, p. 52-62) and Adler and Adler (1994) describe participation in terms of membership to a group, identifying three types of membership roles: peripheral membership, active membership and full membership. I found that this framework reflected my own experiences of fieldwork and it is utilized here to summarize my level of involvement in the various sites I attended. The following table utilizes Adler and Adler’s (1994) typology to illustrate this.

44 This dichotomy is similarly employed by Stocking (1989) to highlight that both Mead (1928) and Malinowski’s (1922) ethnographic method emphasised observation but, never participation. Stocking (1989) accounts for this by suggesting that the positions of power both anthropologists enjoyed within the culture, allowed them to collect data from a privileged position.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership roles</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>My roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Peripheral membership</td>
<td>Observe in setting but do not participate in activities</td>
<td>Watching audiences at shows; accompany graffiti writers ‘tagging’; watching battles and ciphers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Active membership</td>
<td>Researcher participation in some or all activities</td>
<td>Hosting a radio show; some entrepreneurial/organizational activity; spending time socially with informants; helping at video shoots, rehearsals and preparation for shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Full membership</td>
<td>Fully participating in the culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Table 4.1. Membership roles during research

Adler and Adler describe the benefits of *peripheral membership*, where the researcher observes in the setting but does not participate in the group’s activities, as enabling the researcher to ‘observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership’ (1994, p. 380). In regard to my own fieldwork, peripheral membership took me to bars and clubs playing hip-hop music, which remained important in engaging with hip-hop fans and further networking with artists, writers and record company people. I also took on this status when attending live performances around Cape Town (mostly around Long Street, where most of the bars and clubs are located) and also at occasional hip-hop specific events like the annual ‘Hip-Hop Indaba’45, ‘Our Hip-Hop Festival’ and weekly hip-hop parkjams in Gugulethu Township on Sunday afternoons.

I began to get to know a lot of artists better and started hanging around regularly with the groups Archetypes, Writer’s Block, Ill-Literate Skill and Driemanskap as well as about a dozen other MCs and DJs. This access allowed my observations to include the daily routine of people engaging commercially or recreationally in hip-hop culture. Usually these activities revolved around ‘hustling’ to make tracks, music videos and organizing gigs and this type of work is closely examined in chapter 6. If I had

45 Indaba is used in Zulu and Xhosa culture to denote an important gathering.
nothing organized, I visited the cafes, bars and clubs of Long Street or Cadiz on Loop Street because they often facilitated chance encounters with other hip-hop heads. Gradually as time went on, it became routine that I received text messages from respondents asking if we could meet up. As detailed earlier, building up good relationships with local performers gave me access to private sites like their homes and rehearsal spaces and these experiences are included in the category of *peripheral membership*. A selection of these sites are illustrated in the following photographs that show separate instances where I shadowed a graffiti artist and a rapper.

Figure 4.2. Mors spraying the interior of ‘Iron Fist’ clothing store on Kloof Street
DeWalt and DeWalt (1998) highlight that a researcher is required to determine the extent he will participate in the lives of the participants and intervene in naturally occurring situations. However, the degree of participation is not always in a researcher’s hands: Fine (1996) for instance, initially planned to carry out semi-structured interviews with chefs in restaurants but felt compelled to help with the washing up during busy periods. At times I felt a responsibility to get involved and help my respondents as much as possible through a combination of work and advice (I explore this theme further in the ethical research section of this chapter). I was often asked if I could help out in a variety of ways that worked to ‘upgrade’ my membership status from peripheral to active membership. Certain arrangements and bargains were set up between respondents and myself; for instance, I often helped write copy for personal webpages in exchange for greater access. Bernard (1998) has shown how sharing one’s expertise, like I did, often helps establish and develop rapport.

Figure 4.3. Reason being interviewed at Bush radio
In *active membership*, the researcher participates in some or all activities of the culture. Adopting these types of roles proved the most fruitful both in terms of quantity and quality of data I retrieved. As fieldwork progressed, my active membership roles and responsibilities became quite varied. I was for instance, asked by the owner of a record company to witness the signature of artists (pictured below) signing to a record label.

![Figure 4.4. Dla of Driemanskap signs for Pioneer Unit](image)

Many artists began using the pictures I had taken for their own promotional DVDs, press kits and websites and a collection of my photos was even projected on a large screen at an album launch party (pictured below).
I also worked on a hip-hop radio show on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, presenting a regular feature called ‘Gazza’s gig guide’. The reasoning behind my appointment by the host, DJ Nick Knuckles, was that I was going to all the shows anyway and had the best knowledge of upcoming performances. A photograph of me live on UCT radio is shown below.
Many of the hip-hop heads I was studying in Cape Town began to acknowledge me as something of a hub, expressing the sense of irony that a white guy from England had positioned himself so centrally in this wide social network of Cape Town hip-hop heads.

As informants began to seize upon my enthusiasm to get involved in any way I could, I started performing more tasks for people, often writing emails and letters for artists as they applied for funding and sought exposure from media outlets. One MC gave me the tongue-in-cheek job title of ‘international marketing manager’ and expressed his appreciation of having a ‘well educated guy on board’. As research progressed I was more frequently approached to perform a variety of roles ranging from roadie to CD seller to booking agent to even a lighting engineer on a music video shoot. A photograph of me treading water in this unfamiliar role is presented below.

Figure 4.6. Presenting ‘Gazza’s gig guide’ on UCT radio
There was little pressure to undertake these tasks, although if I refused, I would have been unlikely to be asked along to certain events where my labour was needed. To my mind this was a fair exchange, with me providing free work and in return gaining access and a genuine insight from respondents. I also regarded the activities I undertook as fostering a more equal and non-exploitative working relationship.

Through pursuing this variety of roles and responsibilities, the title ‘researcher’ became inadequate and even redundant at times. As informants wished to make the most of my presence by assigning me tasks like CD seller or rehearsal organizer, I began to get introduced as things like photographer or radio host rather than hip-hop researcher or PhD student. This seemed to change my relationship to some and as I gradually felt more and more like an insider, I was pleased to become part of their supportive network of musicians. For many informants, my helping them was their most important and immediate concern and as I became better known, DJs, MCs and graffiti artists often came to visit me unannounced, eager to talk about music or listen

Figure 4.7. Helping out on the ‘Let’s do this’ video shoot
to the British hip-hop I had. What constitutes ‘the field’ verses ‘home’ became a problematic distinction, highlighted below in the photograph of Lolo using my flat as an improvised CD factory.

![Image of Lolo using my flat as an improvised CD factory]

**Figure 4.8. ‘The CD factory’: Lolo makes mix tapes at my flat in Cape Town**

I generally regarded this blurring of boundaries as positive because my fieldwork interactions became more natural and less forced. On occasion however, I felt overwhelmed because I could not get a clear break away from my working environment.

In the methodological literature, there used to be an assumption that the researcher enjoys relative authority over his/her respondents. For instance, LaRossa et al assert that there is a ‘relative powerlessness of the subject vis-à-vis the researcher’ (1981, p. 306). More recent authors however have shown that power relationships in the field are more dynamic (Rosalso 1993; Clifford and Marcus 1986). Like these latter authors I found, perhaps owing to my long engagement in the field, the reality much more fluid than earlier writers suggest. Initially, my work was completely dependant
upon respondents accepting me into their social circles, or at the very least acknowledging me, but as I began to get integrated more and more, some came to rely upon my help. I could not because of time constraints devote myself fully to everyone and had to be careful not to spread myself too thinly and ensure that I devote my time strategically in order to get a more rounded picture of the overall hip-hop scene. Over the course of the 12 months, the power seemed to shift from my respondents and towards me.

Throughout all these endeavours, I never considered myself to have Full Membership because I did not practice any of the hip-hop elements. Crucially, I had never learnt to spin vinyl, breakdance and spent no time sketching or composing rhymes, which is a basic and time-consuming activity that hip-hop heads take great pride in (TOP is shown in deep concentration writing a song below).

Figure 4.9. TOP writing lyrics in his backyard in Gugulethu
However, as the months progressed some of my informants began considering me as a ‘head’ because I demonstrated great interest in hip-hop and had incorporated it into my lifestyle. On one occasion the Archetypes, Be4za and myself had left a gig on the outskirts of town and as we climbed in the back of a cab were approached by a group of girls the others knew. They invited us to accompany them to a nightclub that was playing House music. Be4za immediately countered: ‘no, thanks…we’re all hip hop heads in here’, implying that we had little interest in other music. One of the girls looked over and pointed at me, asking: ‘even him?’ Be4za was quick to respond, ‘he’s the biggest head here!’ I was proud of my new label but found it undeserved and because I wasn’t involved in any form of creative production, never considered myself as a full member of the hip-hop scene.

Becoming integrated into the social networks of Cape Town hip-hop practitioners certainly made some aspects of data collection easier but I still faced other significant challenges in pursuing this fieldwork.

4.3. Challenges of the field

One of the fundamental ways ethnography departs from other research methods is in the unique challenges it places on the researcher. It requires continual involvement for a prolonged period of time, often in unfamiliar and foreign surroundings with a degree of drudgery and discomfort. The need to interact with the social world, where things are in a constant state of flux, means that this method also places a premium on improvisation and flexibility, requiring researchers to ‘think on their feet’. This ethnography in particular posed immense tactical and emotional burdens upon me as I confronted dangerous fieldwork conditions, managed research in a divided city and studied a musical culture I was initially unfamiliar with.

4.3.1. Confronting dangerous fieldwork conditions

The ethnographic canon and early research from the Chicago School are full of studies on gang culture and street life where the researcher explicitly places himself in
physical danger (e.g. Wirth 1928; Whyte 1955; Becker 1966). More recently, Ghassem-Fachandi (2009) has edited a collection of ethnographic studies with violence as a central theme and Werdmolder (1997) confesses that he was present in the planning of criminal activities including burglaries, drug deals and car thefts. Sluka (1990) and Kovats-Bernat (2002) have both argued that ethnographic research has become much more dangerous in recent decades. Hazards are often overlooked however as ethnographers researching dangerous people or places have a tendency to approach their topic with a romantic sentimentality (for instance, Ferrell and Hamm 1998; Lee 2001; Tewksbury 1995). This partially accounts for the absence of literature offering guidance on researcher safety even through there is a plethora of work that offers advice on protecting the wellbeing of respondents.

Punch does not explicitly offer advice but nonetheless argues that the personality of the researcher largely determines the viability of participant observation (1986, p. 210). The validity of this statement is heightened in research like my own which was accompanied by the spectre of violence, crime and an element of discomfort. Personal dispositions will make some researchers exclude themselves from high-risk situations or at the very least find it impossible to disguise their discomfort and establish rapport with informants. There were numerous instances in fieldwork where the greatest negotiation tool I had in interactions with dangerous people, dangerous places and dangerous situations was my personal character and disposition. This was most clear at times of potential violence when I had to stick up for myself and prove that I would not be pushed around.

A great deal of my informants lived in the black and coloured Townships on the outskirts of the city. I had heard many scary stories from others and indeed read many in the local and national press about these ‘lawless’ and poverty-stricken districts. Many white and middleclass black people in central Cape Town were surprised when I told them I ventured into Townships and as mentioned at the start of the thesis, on

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46 In particular, Sluka (1990) draws attention to the use of fieldwork by intelligence agencies creates a greater suspicion towards researchers. Kovats-Bernat (2002) argues that there has been a shift towards research focusing around cultures of violence and volatile states. The feelings of danger that a lot of researchers encounter is often compounded by the lonely and disorientating experience of fieldwork, when people often find themselves in a strange and alien land of cultural difference where there is a physical separation from professional support provided by a University department and personal support provided by friends and family.

47 Kovats-Bernat (2002, p. 211) argues that dangers may have been neglected in methodological literature because the ‘passive’ nature of native populations has changed in the post-colonial context.
one of my first trips when I boarded a public taxi, the driver and passengers even assumed that I was on the wrong bus! Any spark of ethnographic romance I had in my mind about these places was quickly distinguished the first time I heard the deafening sounds of gunshots one Sunday afternoon in the Township of Gugulethu. Although dismissed by my chaperone, Ma-b, as ‘probably just celebrations gunshots’, I was unnerved nonetheless.

I soon discovered that my difference aided my safety as it often caught people off guard and I found that most people were genuinely appreciative that a white foreigner had entered into their neighbourhoods that others regarded a no-go area. One friend joked that his neighbours presumed that I must be mad: ‘Yo Gary, if you just stay silent they will assume the worst. They probably think you’re crazy for even being here’. I always entered Townships with a chaperone and as my experiences developed, I found that my prejudices were unfounded, as time spent in central Cape Town seemed to pose a far greater danger. While my experiences in Townships were overwhelmingly positive, time spent in town resulted in me getting my laptop stolen twice and being the victim of an attempted robbery. This paradox can be explained by the fact that I was always accompanied in Townships with people who lived there and was accepted by association. While in town however, I was more often by myself, presenting a more vulnerable target.

I encountered many shady characters with different degrees of involvement in the hip-hop scene. I have a great anxiety towards guns and was quite shocked when one of my informants boasted of collecting them. As I was presented with real and threatened violence, I realised that negotiating these circumstances is not something that can be taught in postgraduate research training. Most respondents however, perhaps recognizing that I might present an easy target, conferred upon me a level of paternalism. In particular, I was warned by a handful of associates that one person, who happened to be a gifted and well-known MC, should be steered clear of at all costs because of his regular hard-drug consumption and history of serious violence. I decided I should make up my own mind and while initially we got on and shared beers together, I took a step back when he was found to have stolen a car and mobile phone from others I had got to know. In these circumstances, the researcher has only
‘gut’ feeling to rely on, and this became my point of reference and I would at times
deselect respondents from further interaction.

As I began spending more and more time with respondents, I occasionally found
myself in perilous situations. The following diary extract illustrates such an incident.

I spent the day with MC Jacob [pseudonym] in his neighbourhood of
Claremont. After Jacob went to a cash machine, he told me that he had to
go to someone’s house to pick something up, I had no idea what. We
walked to an art deco flat complex and rang the buzzer, after a minute or
so we were allowed in. We walked around the corner and Jacob rang the
doorbell, Jacob introduced me to a slim guy wearing jeans but no shirt, we
shook hands and entered into a large open-plan room; minimally furnished
with a large screen TV and two large double bed mattresses in each corner.
The curtains were drawn and after being in the bright sunshine, it seemed
very dark. Jacob sat on the bed and said he wanted two, I had no idea what
he was talking about. I soon found to my horror that he meant two rocks of
crack cocaine and that I had unwittingly entered a crack den.

The guy disappeared for a couple of minutes and came back, giving Jacob
two small white rocks. There was a girl sitting on the bed with a loose
blouse with three buttons undone who gave my companion a small
transparent pipe to smoke the rock. He asked me if I wanted any, I
declined and he carried on oblivious to my discomfort. After Jacob gave a
puff to the women sitting on the bed and when I came back from the toilet
Jacob and the girl had gone. I sat on the bed, watched the TV and tried to
look calm. After about five minutes Jacob came back with his shirt off and
asked me if I was okay. I said I was and he said that he’d be back in ten
minutes. After he finished his seedy business, I was relieved to leave.

Fieldwork Diary, 27th January 2007

Williams et al (1992) make the point that an ethnographer may face risk not from
their research population but from others such as police and rival dangerous groups,
and during fieldwork, dangerous situations emerged out of the close associations I had
with informants. For instance, an inevitable consequence of spending much
recreational time in bars is drunkenness and occasionally this brought violent
confrontations. These experiences often happened in the evening, on one occasion an
informant of mine, Peter, slapped a man neither of us knew across the face after
seeing him hit his girlfriend. Another time, a respondent called Johnny threw water
over the face of a stranger in a toilet after being asked to hurry washing his hands. On
one rather boisterous night walking from one nightspot to another, an MC I had
recently met called Jesus leapt on a car and walked along the street jumping from one
to another and insulting male passers by, speculating that they could not sexually satisfy their girlfriends. Other dangerous situations emerged directly from hip-hop related activity like when I would accompany a graffiti writer on ‘bomber’ missions around town. On one such occasion, an angry resident who insisted that she had just called the police confronted us and Midus and myself had to run away. The potential for serious consequences of engaging in this deviant endeavour was revealed when Midus rolled up the bottom of his jeans to show a gunshot scar on the back of his leg, left by a policeman who fired at him while chasing him along train tracks. These dangerous situations often made me reluctant to go into areas I was unfamiliar, with people I did not know well and could not trust.

When encountering dangerous situations, Peritore argues that ‘the researcher must be certain that the research has enough scientific seriousness that potential risks are repaid with significant knowledge’ (1990, p. 362). I’m not sure what ‘scientific seriousness’ means but put aside that it implies a kind of academic snobbery; it seems misguided because no ethnography can be important enough to justify bodily harm or potentially fatal danger. It also assumes that the researcher can make an accurate prediction of what each encounter and situation will bring. I found that most days in fieldwork, like in life, are unpredictable and unforeseeable which makes health and safety assessments redundant. At times, this unpredictable nature of fieldwork was emotionally exhausting and made me feel permanently on edge.

I recognized that I could not completely remove myself from danger during fieldwork and that any hazards should be negotiated instead of avoided because this was the everyday reality of my informants and I did not want to remove myself completely from them. In these circumstances I did my best to adopt pragmatic strategies for survival. There were no hard and fast rules but I only journeyed into Townships with chaperones and was careful to not display any overt symbols of wealth like designer jeans and an expensive watch and I generally attempted a keep a low profile. This was obviously easier in some places than others and as a white person I found it impossible to blend into any Township crowd.
4.3.2. Managing factionalism and pursuing research in a divided city

The urban environment that surrounds Cape Town hip-hop throws up some unique dilemmas for a researcher. In particular I found it difficult to negotiate prevailing racist and xenophobic attitudes, the geographical division of the city and the feuding characteristics or ‘beefs’ endemic in hip-hop rivalry. I spent time in both black and coloured Townships, but most of my data from these areas derives from the black Townships of Gugulethu and Langa.

During fieldwork I found great difficulties in negotiating this racial factionalism of the city. Because the overwhelming majority of my respondents were black and coloured, the prevailing white racism directed towards these populations largely escaped me during observations of hip-hop as white people were largely absent from them. My experience correlates with Back (1996) who describes the tension he felt between prevalent racist ideas and the relationships he enjoyed with participants. While I only encountered racist rhetoric occasionally, I always challenged them and this sometimes provoked hostility. One memorable instance involved my expulsion from a property because my white housemates feared my black visitors would steal their possessions. The most shocking thing from my perspective was that when my informants learnt about this they were not surprised and seemed used to receiving this kind of discrimination. After this instance, I was happy to leave and move in with a respondent who had become a close friend.

However, I did not feel the same compulsion to argue against racism when some of my informants expressed their hatred of white South Africans. This contradiction was crystallized one evening while I was staying with an informant in Langa Township.

We were up late into the night watching DVDs of extreme African American evangelical preachers Lolo collected. These films emphasized black power and Garveyism, on one of the DVD’s, the preacher urged black people globally to refer to white people as ‘mutanoids’ because humans were originally black and some subsequently ‘mutated’ to have white skin.

Fieldwork Diary, 24th July 2007
For weeks after the friends I had watched the film with humorously referred me to me as ‘mutanoid’. Rather than take offence, I took this as a reflection of their fondness towards me and trust that had developed between us.

Chapter 5, on the hip-hop communities of Cape Town, explains in part how the ethnic divisions of South Africa filter into hip-hop. This separation meant I had to spread myself across all areas of the city in order to get a balanced image of the overall scene and this posed problems in terms of mobility. I located myself in central Cape Town but often fieldwork required me to travel to the black and coloured Townships that surround the city. A reliable public transport network does not service these places so I regularly had to rely upon other forms of transportation and I was grateful that my fellow presenter on a hip-hop radio show sometimes offered me lifts to parkjams and musical events. My experiences mirrored my participants as they often incurred difficulty in transporting musical equipment to and from their neighbourhoods. Transport regularly had to be improvised and the picture below shows a ride taken early one morning in order to get to rehearsals. Lolo bribed the driver with two bottles of beer in order to secure this ride.

Figure 2.10. Travelling to early morning rehearsals in the back of a pick-up truck
Agar (1980) suggests that desirable informants must be respected within the community and viewed as neutral so as not to alienate the researcher from others. But in regard to Cape Town hip-hop, because of the racial division, I found it impossible to find anyone who was universally respected. However, in the minds of many of my informants, by virtue of my outsider status and Anglo-whiteness, I remained neutral and impartiality towards local politics of race. This was because most hip-hop competition in the city occurred between blacks and coloureds and not whites and although many of my sample articulated their mistrust and even hatred of white South Africans, as an Englishman, I was exempt from these ill-feelings.

4.3.3. ‘Can you kick a freestyle?’: Learning and living hip-hop

It is a central tenet of anthropology that ethnographers learn the mores of the culture they study and this typically means the various customs and conventions that manifest themselves in people’s everyday lives. Some writers have also demonstrated that cultural learning has the practical benefit of aiding interaction with informants and smooth immersion into the field (Schensul et al 1999; Phillips 1975). In order to facilitate interaction with possible respondents I took the burden of learning the various conventions of hip-hop culture as well as more specific information about the Cape Town scene and I found the best way to achieve this was by spending as much time with research participants as possible. This strategy provided further obstacles, as I was required to work within an unconventional environment with an unreliable research population.

I arrived in Cape Town almost completely ignorant about the technical aspects of hip-hop cultural production and had no personal proficiency with any of the key elements. I also only had an elementary knowledge about the conventions of the wider culture, gleaned mainly from things I had read or seen on TV. Early on in my observations, when I began spending time with informants, some expected me to join in their hip-hop related activities and on one memorable occasion I was pointedly asked: ‘Are you a head or what, can you even kick a freestyle?’ I was always honest about my novice status but at every opportunity affirmed my desire to learn more. While some authors have suggested that researchers mimic the dress and demeanour of their sample
population (e.g. Wolf 1991; Taylor and Bogdan 1984), my strategy was to remain myself as any pretence would be disingenuous and probably visible to those in the know.

Initially, I also had little knowledge about Cape Town hip-hop because research on the scene was impossible to do in any meaningful way prior to departure. There were scarcely any journalistic sources available on the Internet and the little information that was available was predominately out of date. I attempted to establish email contact with artists who had an online presence but replies were superficial and infrequent. Any dedicated hip-hop websites seemed to be out of date, poorly maintained and inadequate and information provided was predominately about the handful of acts who had toured Europe (like Godessa, Black Noise and Prophets of da City). Although incomplete, this at least gave me a start off point when engaging with the local scene.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the best ways for a researcher to gain trust and facilitate prolonged engagement is to live in the context being studied. In order to learn more, I positioned myself in central Cape Town and made interaction with artists part of my daily routine. Bernard states: ‘the most important thing you can do to stop being a freak is to speak the language you are studying – and speak it well’ (1994, p. 145). The author asserts this facilitates access and rapport and illustrates to participants that you have a vested, non-transient interest in the community. In Cape Town, while some artists choose to rap in Afrikaans or isiXhosa, English is used as the lingua franca in most social settings and although I never approached fluency in any of the indigenous languages, I did learn enough to greet and engage in simple, polite verbal exchanges. The difficulty I had in learning more taught me that there was a limit to what could be learnt even when spending an alot of time with informants so I set my expectations lower, instead tasking myself to learn the technical and cultural lexicon of hip-hop. This also entailed learning about the various styles of hip-hop, the origins of the culture. I found that such knowledge was necessary in deciphering conversations between hip-hop musicians but was also valuable in communicating with them on their own terms. While talking to experts about the culture (as many of my informants were), a lot of time would have been lost.
if I had to keep asking them basic questions about meaning and they might have taken me less seriously.

I soon discovered that learning by living brings unique challenges in the study of hip-hop. Although to many it might sound like fun, conducting research in bars and clubs is far from straightforward. The smoky environment troubled me at times and in the morning often left me with a sore throat and smelly clothes. Most activity in these places occurred in the evening and early hours of the morning and this disrupted my sleeping patterns and meant that note taking would inevitably have to happen the following day when events were less fresh in my memory. Ethnography at its most basic level can be reduced to a series of conversations and the high volume in these spaces meant accurate and in-depth communication was difficult. It took some time for my ears to become attuned to African accents and I sometimes had to ask people to repeat themselves or ask questions that they had already given me the answer to. Ferguson recounts a similar dilemma when he believed he was gaining good rapport with a Zambian national in a busy bar in the Copperbelt (1999, p. 207). Only later, in a quieter setting, he discovered the person was in fact a fellow American on vacation!

Hip-hop heads are a notoriously unruly bunch and there were further obstacles in researching this disorganized group. Arranging meetings was difficult, as many of my informants did not have mobile phones or computers to regularly check their email accounts. When meetings could be arranged, I discovered that people were reluctant to stick to a set prearranged times and because tight workdays and home/family pressures were virtually non-existent among this group, I had to be relaxed about others’ punctuality and reliability. To illustrate this point, I relay a typical text message, sent to my telephone to reschedule a planned meeting:

Good morning my friend. Hope you doing fine. The weather is throwing my plans way off today. I suggest we reschedule. Hope this is okay. Holla at your boy.

**Personal communication**

The tendency of my informants to be unreliable caused me some degree of frustration, especially when trying to organize interviews but I had to learn to accept it as a characteristic of the group I was studying. One benefit it afforded me however was that they readily understood if I had to let them down or was late for a meeting.
4.4. Generating and analysing data

4.4.1. Generating data

It has been over two decades since Spradley (1979) advocated the use of all available media in the presentation of ethnographies, including video, photographs, music, field notes and interviews. In this research I have adopted a flexible methodology and included as many forms of data as possible in the hope that it will produce a richer, more textured and accessible document. This section explores the collection of these different types of data as well as commenting on how the Hawthorne effect, a form of reactivity whereby subjects improve or modify aspects of their behaviour, might have affected data and how ‘proxies’ were used in the collection of information.

Burgess suggests that ‘note-taking is a personal activity that depends on the research context, the objects of the research, and the relationship with informants’ (1991, p. 192), and throughout fieldwork I adopted a bookish attitude towards maintaining a detailed fieldwork diary, carrying around a notebook in order to jot things down before I could get to my laptop. I arranged my notes into passages or paragraphs, which included descriptions, events and dialogue, which I then coded. This was to provide the bedrock of all data collected. To complement this, I also endeavoured to collect printed documents such as advertisements, teaching material, websites, contracts, newsletters, posters, minutes of meetings, magazine and newspaper clippings, which related to the local hip-hop scene. This also incorporated online resources such as the pages of musicians’ social networking sites like myspace and facebook.

Although photographs and visual prompts are omnipresent in modern living (Ball and Smith 1992), this has not filtered fully into social science texts. Grady for instance, highlights that peer reviewed journals are reluctant to publish photographs (2001, p. 1) and while ethnography has a rich history of using photographs, these have overwhelmingly been employed for documentary purposes and as a supplement to textual data (Flick 2002). The deficit of this approach is heightened in an audio and visual culture like hip-hop, so throughout research, I took an abundance of photographs and audio recordings and catalogued images I took with my digital camera including graffiti pieces, tags and pictures of rehearsals or performances. I
also did my best to make recordings with my digital recorder of freestyle battles, interviews of interesting guests on my radio show, rehearsals and some performances. I also strived to collect relevant hip-hop music: this meant all the material that the groups I was spending time with have produced and also the songs that they listened to or recommended. This data was used to get a better background and understanding of my respondents and the overall scene as well as aiding my communication with hip-hop practitioners.

Interviews provided an invaluable source of fieldwork data. Through pursuing participant observations, I had had previous contact with all interviewees so I was able to reflect on daily interactions, enabling me to formulate questions suited to individual respondents. Some informants were unreliable in terms of turning up for interviews so on half a dozen occasions I took the opportunity to attach a microphone to their lapel when they visited my flat and began asking them questions I had formulated. In a similar strategy to that advocated by Heisley and Levy (1991, p. 257) and Flick (2002, p. 151), I used photographs as visual prompts and encouraged interviewees to produce a narrative and expand upon the photographic evidence I provided and found that these could often provide the benefit of conjuring up moods and memories. For instance, on one occasion I was talking to a respondent about a parkjam that had occurred some months earlier. He had great difficulty in remembering the event I was talking about but after showing him photos of it he was able to relay his feelings in great detail.

It needs to be noted here that although my overall ethnographic sample contains 5 females, none were formally interviewed. While I made every effort to interview female heads, I had difficulty in achieving this goal. The main reason for this was that in Cape Town, females are more absent from the public sphere than males (this topic was explored further in the previous chapter) and there was therefore less of an opportunity for me to approach and pester this section of the research sample to submit themselves to interview. As a consequence of this omission, men provide all interview extracts contained in this thesis and this has had the unfortunate result of working to obscure female voices within Cape Town hip-hop.

The Hawthorne effect is a form of reactivity where research subjects change their behaviour once they understand they are being studied and this phenomenon had a
most obvious impact when I took out my camera and began taking photos. The Hawthorne effect is a term from psychology with strong behavioural implications, and it is rare for anthropologists to explore these issues with reference to this particular idiom. Indeed, the whole rationale for extended participant observation is about blending-in over time, as the ripples you make on first entry to the field disappear. I have employed the term however because I believe it is useful in explaining some of the ways I judged informants to regulate their behaviour in my presence. More recently, the emphasis on fieldwork as ‘dialogic’ takes as a given that presence does have an effect, and data emerges out of dialogue between the ethnographer and those they research. Among others, this perspective has been utilized by Arauso (2006) in his study of ‘sound practices’ in Rio de Janeiro.

Research from Bogdan and Biklem (2003, p. 105-6) and Flick (2002, p. 152) show that they were guilty of influencing the situation especially when informants consciously posed for the camera. Gibson argues however that even self-conscious poses can be useful because the way a person represents themselves in front of a camera is important in itself as you can get a perception of how they want to be viewed by others (2005, p. 3). Initially, I was reluctant to take pictures at shows or tape rappers but quickly realized that at every event there were at least a dozen people waving their cameras or camcorders (not to mention mobile phones) in the air so documenting these events was a naturalized aspect of the setting. The two photographs below illustrate this point further, in the first you can see a range of professional photographers taking photos at a performance and in the next you can see a passer-by with no formal research agenda recording a freestyle hip-hop battle during a Township parkjam.
Figure 4.11. TOP and Grits perform in front of numerous photographers

Figure 4.12. A park jam audience member records Sole freestyling
An unanticipated aid to data collection was provided by the willingness of my informants to make hip-hop related recordings or take photographs themselves. People regularly appropriated my camera and insisting on taking pictures making it become a collective asset. Similar to findings presented by Warren and Karner (2005, p. 171), I found that photographs taken by participants are better at reflecting their own views and helped to provide insight into things I assumed not to be important.

4.4.2. Triangulation and the pursuit of accurate data

Triangulation is the process of using a variety of procedures to cross-examine information retrieved. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), the strategy I adopted of incorporating a range of data to complement the ethnography, will add to the validity of the overall study. Similarly, Breuer and Roth (2003) assert that using different approaches to data collection and observation leads to a richer understanding of the social context and the participants of the study. In furthering the pursuit of accurate data during fieldwork I also placed an emphasis on cross checking information, identified reliable key-informants, incorporated a range of differently positioned actors and attempted to identify inaccurate responses.

The phenomenon of Chinese whispers, when information gets distorted and often exaggerated as it is passed on from person to person, occurred continuously during fieldwork. Such an instance is revealed in the following extract from my fieldwork diary.

I was at Zulu bar on Long Street to watch the Archetypes perform. One of the groups’ members shocked me when he said another band member had been stabbed in the abdomen and badly beaten up by four youths in the early hours, on the way back from a night of heavy drinking. As the evening progressed, I discussed this incident with others at the gig and we doubted he would perform. To my relief he walked in an hour later, looking healthy. I rushed towards him and said I had heard what had happened and asked if he was okay. I soon realised the story I heard had been exaggerated somewhat: there were only three assailants and they hadn’t stabbed him but just landed some solid blows on his face and around his body.

Fieldwork Diary, 14th September 2007
Due to this popular phenomenon, I became mindful that it was important to closely scrutinize what was told to me by participants and attempted to cross check information, placing great importance to noting any contradictions, because these could reveal how data collected previously could have been skewed or wrongly interpreted. In-group discussions between myself and other informants were useful in this endeavour because having everyone present was an immediate source of counter evidence. There was also a degree of bravado among respondents that gave many a tendency to boast or exaggerate their involvement with hip-hop and this made some more reliable than others. I remember one instance when I had been drinking with someone who had claimed musical collaboration with a popular local group, the Archetypes. Unfortunately for him, one of the other people drinking with us was actually a member of the group and exclaimed: ‘I’m in the Archetypes and I haven’t a fucking idea who you are!’ A few minutes later he made his excuses and left, suitably embarrassed. A further problem I encountered was the abundance of respondents I encountered who failed to give stable or consistent meanings to things, people and events. This is of course also part of the nature of social life and not just a reflection of the group of people I investigated.

Collins rightly asserts that it is always the case that when someone’s experience is incorporated into data, decisions about ‘who to trust, what to believe and why something is true are not benign academic issues’, but are instead of central importance (1990, p. 202). I adopted a strategy of attempting to identify ‘key informants’ whose version of events could be regarded as highly accurate. This is important because the famous ‘Mead-Freeman controversy’ acts as a cautionary tale that illustrates how different researchers reach different understandings based in part on the key informants used. I became aware however that my reliance on these individuals might also give me a one-sided view so I was careful to be aware of this in my interactions.

Bernard (1998) warns against choosing informants who might represent one side of warring factions as the researcher might be seen as an affiliate, which could discourage others from speaking to him. I soon realised that this advice is redundant.

48 Freeman (1983) attempted to replicate Mead’s study (1928) on Samoan attitudes to sexuality and the transition to adulthood and arrived at quite different interpretations. Freeman suggests that Mead’s informants misled her by telling her what they wanted her to believe, rather than what was accurate. Subsequently, Freeman has himself been critiqued on similar themes (e.g. Shankman 1996).
in Cape Town because almost all participants are divided along race lines (this theme is analysed in-depth in chapter 5). However, I did not find my affiliations with either group to impinge on my relationships because I was regarded as an outsider who was detached from the local politics of race.

During fieldwork, it was common to get a poor response from the questions I posed informants. Many answers were cryptic and elusive as artists attempted to create a shroud of mystery around their musical pursuits. They mainly did this because they feared others would copy their ideas or they would fail to see their plans materialize and become ashamed or embarrassed. The following is a diary extract of such an occasion.

X and Big Dre came around in the afternoon, they said that they had been in town for a meeting and were now on their way home so they thought they would drop in. I asked if this was a ‘Writer’s Block’ meeting (the group they were in) and the response was typically cryptic, ‘Nah, not a Writer’s Block meeting, more of just a few of us cats getting together to plot some stuff. You’ll hear about it when you have to’.

Fieldwork Diary, 22nd November 2007

This diary extract also serves as an illustration of how I was incorporated into the social networks of musicians, but also excluded from some intimate information because they feared I would share it. Through this and similar experiences, I learnt that the best approach when enquiring into aspects of professional or personal lives people either did not want to talk about was not to directly question as people often became guarded and even more elusive. This was especially the case early on in fieldwork while rapport was being established. I generally tried to wait until the subject was raised by respondents and then followed up on what they said. My long engagement in the field afforded me the ability to be patient in this way. I saw getting the skill of balancing active pressing and passive listening was a crucial feature of fieldwork but something that could only be learnt to a degree.
4.4.3. Approaching analysis

To a great extent, the analysis of research material began when I made the decision of what to note down and what to ignore in my fieldwork diary because this act of reporting necessarily renders some observations more important than others and the decision by the researcher in choosing what data to count as ‘research’ is inevitably a subjective decision (Atkinson 1990). After fieldwork I continued this process of analysis by assembling all the raw data together in order to get an overview. I then brought order to it by organizing it under categories and then drew out overarching themes. Although typologies originally referred to texts, the growth of visual ethnography has meant that some ethnographic data has become based on photographs (Pink 2001) and although visual data does not provide the backbone of my data, they are incorporated into this thesis and I also categorized the photographs taken during fieldwork.

Whilst there is almost an overabundance of literature offering an assortment of methodological advice on the topics of choosing a method or of employing methods once in the field, there are relatively few dedicated to the discussion of the best way to interpret qualitative data (notable exceptions are: Silverman 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Jackson 2001 and Crang 2001). These works generally agree that the process follows clear stages of transcribing, coding and finally analysing. I found however that there was significant overlap in these tasks as analysing was always in the back of my mind throughout each procedure. While, like many of my postgraduate peers, I found the transcription phase a laborious and protracted one, I found it useful in reviewing all material and avoiding a focus on just the most memorable events and conversations that stuck in my memory.

I found coding to be a highly efficient way to sort all of the research data, especially in light of having gathered such a wide range of material. I did find this practice quite mysterious however as it was described to me by experienced academic colleagues that themes should ‘emerge’ out of the data in much the same way as images become clear in a microscope when the lens is adjusted. One problem I found with this process is that there is a tendency to give more importance to common occurring themes when possibly less frequent ones can be more significant and revealing. Overall however, I found the process of coding most useful as it allowed me to group
information together and conveniently access related material. The most important themes to emerge were the type of livelihoods that artists pursued, hip-hop community affiliations and understandings of authenticity, which subsequently became the three empirical chapters of this thesis.

I avoided using qualitative computer packages like NVivo and Atlas.ti during analysis and instead followed Glaser and Strauss (1967) in allowing a research narrative to emerge more naturally from my own interactions and fieldwork experiences. Ultimately approaching analysis is a subjective task and I endeavoured to highlight those themes that I found most relevant and interesting and ignored others, even if it was showed that they appeared more frequently.

4.5. Ethical Research

4.5.1. Skirting the boundaries of honesty and illegality: ethnographic confessions and misdemeanours

Erving Goffman (1959) noted that secrets and deceptions are prevalent in an assortment of human interactions and posed the rhetorical question of why we expect sociologists to be above this. The lack of confessional tales in ethnography seems to suggest that anthropologists have been reluctant to reveal the dark underbelly of their endeavours and it seems the power of the authorial voice might have eclipsed many professional misdemeanours. Due to the parameters of the research environment I found myself in, I encountered practical difficulty in working within the idealized ethical standards of sociology and this section recounts instances of deception and criminality I encountered. As a method that relies upon the principle of writing the researcher within the narrative, I believe honest disclosure is fundamental to the credibility and validity of any ethnographic account.

During fieldwork, I soon discovered that the Cape Town hip-hop scene and the pursuit of academic research were awkward bedfellows. Indeed, my respondents were often puzzled about the nature of my fieldwork and at times it was difficult to convince respondents that going to a live performance or a bar constituted ‘work’. Slightly bewildered one respondent asked: ‘Does your University know you’re
conducting research with drinks and girls?” and it amused many when I assured them that I had the full backing of my academic supervisors. Hobbs recounts a similar experience in connection with his fieldwork in ‘entrepreneurship’ (a euphemism for illegal and legal behaviour) in London’s East End when he:

often had to be reminded that [he] was not in a pub to enjoy [himself] but to conduct an academic inquiry, and repeatedly woke up the following morning with an incredible hangover facing the dilemma of whether to bring it up or write it up (1988, p. 6).

The realities of this social world also meant that at times encounters with crime and deviance were inescapable. These transgressions are part of the wider culture and to ignore or separate myself from them would only provide a partial picture of the world I encountered. The picture below highlights the blasé nature some informants had towards illegal behaviour. In this photograph, the TV interviewer looks on, unfazed while TOP rolls a joint in front of a national audience.

Figure 4.13. TOP rolls a joint while being interviewed by e.tv
The lack of clear separation between my own social activities and ‘formal’ research meant that much of my everyday life had ethical implications for my study. This point was emphasised in the aftermath of sharing of a bottle of wine after working on a local radio show. I had no idea that alcohol was banned from the studio and unfortunately, one of my informants, DJ Nick Knuckles was reprimanded with a disciplinary letter from the station’s manager after the incident.

Believing that association with an English guy might give them a competitive advantage and form of esteem, I was at times asked to pretend to be a manager or music producer and contact the press and booking agents on behalf of local hip-hop artists. I usually agreed to play along and saw this dishonesty as a way to reciprocate the generosity shown towards me. Punch also recounts numerous experiences in his work with the Amsterdam police where he was at times expected to be dishonest and recounts:

Tom wanted to move the cars which were blocking the station, and said sternly to the suspect, but with a smile at me behind his back, ‘You stay here with your hands up and don’t try anything because this detective here [pointing at me] is keeping an eye on you’ (1979, p. 8).

In both these cases, Punch and myself were asked to lie in order to help our respondents go about their work. I usually agreed to this but when dishonesty was not work related, like being asked to lie and cover up cheating on wives and girlfriends (whom I also got to know), I was more reluctant and refused. My respondents were usually understanding of my reluctance to do this but on occasion I was blamed for letting them down. In this sense, I set myself limits of what I would and wouldn’t agree to, much in the same way as Giulianotti did in his study of football hooligans. The sociologist reveals that: ‘My own rules are that I will not get involved in fighting or become a go-between for two gangs in organizing fights’ (1995, p. 10).

During fieldwork, I learnt about illicit drug use and even serious violent crime committed by some of my research sample and many writers in the social sciences advise strongly against a researcher engaging in any criminal activities (e.g. Polsky 1967). However, I could not escape criminal association and any strict reluctance on my part would have distanced me from fieldwork participants. Hobbs recounts a similar dilemma in his own work when:
A refusal, or worse still an enquiry concerning the legal status of the ‘parcel’, would provoke an abrupt conclusion to the relationship. Consequently, I was willing to skirt the boundaries of criminality on several occasions (1988, p. 7).

I found that some illegal boundaries, like spraying graffiti in an illegal space, are transgressed as an inevitable side effect of hip-hop cultural production and subsequently I accompanied and worked as a police ‘lookout’ for Sudim and other graffiti artists in their illegal writing activities. Through prolonged interaction to this section of my research sample, I became partially desensitized towards these illegal transgressions.

4.5.2. ‘Only if you call me Pedro Fernandez’: issues of anonymity

Anonymity involves the removal of the identifying information of research informants and is often portrayed as a safeguard to protect people and is often a taken for granted practice in social research. The result should be that the researcher tells a story but without telling the reader whose story it is. In pursuing this research, I found problems in this approach and while some anonymity was required, I argue that an ethnographer must scrutinize this convention and not necessary adopt a blanket approach to confidentiality.

The typical procedure of giving informants anonymity automatically assumes that they want their involvement to be kept secret. However, a lot of my respondents were musicians who were pursuing fame and when I asked them if they wanted me to use a pseudonym, they laughed off the suggestion. One respondent joked: ‘okay you can change my name, but only if you call me Pedro Fernandez’. I think social researchers are at times over sensitive to these issues and should avoid making decisions on behalf of others. Providing complete anonymity without thought is patronizing and Shulman argues that it has the unintended consequence of casting participants as ‘powerless and in need of protection’ and that researchers should instead adopt a stance where participants are treated as, ‘professional colleagues who deserve as much recognition as the traditional scholar’ (1990, p. 14).

A further disadvantage of removing personal information about respondents is that it disqualifies them from responding to the research once it is complete. It can also remove
contextual information in the case of hip-hop where names are self-selected and often have specific meanings. In this sense, as Heaton argues, ‘efforts to disguise the identity of informants may also spoil and distort the data’ (2004, p. 83). Other writers have shown that among some populations, the practice of anonymity can be unrealistic. Van der Geest sought to practice confidentiality in his research in Ghana because it discussed the practice of abortion in a society where it was a taboo and punishable by ten years in prison. However, the author articulated the difficulty in this:

Ghana’s academic community is like a village. Through my (the author’s) name it would be simple to trace the identity of the town and consequently the informants (2003, p. 15).

Similarly, it would be relatively easy for the people I studied and those with even a passing knowledge of South African hip-hop to identify those I write about, making pseudonyms ineffective. This difficulty is especially pronounced when the researcher incorporates the use of photographs (like I do) in their research. The furore that surrounded Sheper-Hughes’s (2001) study of mental illness in rural Ireland similarly illustrates the way that an author’s strategy of confidentiality can be a complete failure. In this instance, the villagers were able to identify each other and outsiders easily found the village in question and it subsequently became a popular visiting spot for curiosity seekers and other anthropologists. I could not give a fictional name of the city I studied because its uniqueness is at the heart of my analysis.

It soon became clear however that a degree of anonymity would have to be provided as some of my data deals with sensitive elements (like criminal activity) and it is the nature of ethnographic analysis that a lot of findings are speculative, gained indirectly and from inference and the potential reader would not automatically understand this. My approach to this issue follows on from Nespor who argues: ‘I think we should discard them (anonymity practice) as automatic default positions and instead articulate a clearer politics behind our strategies of identification or masking’ (2002, p. 564). During research, I used my own judgment and appropriated Rock’s (2001) suggestion as a safeguard, that when information was sensitive, I would defer judgment and ask the opinions of informants and when I employ pseudonyms, it is indicated. This is a thorny issue in all ethnography and many of the most vivid and telling vignettes which I collected during fieldwork could not be relayed because the events were impossible to
make anonymous as the telling would reveal the participants to those who were at all familiar.

4.5.3. ‘Don’t quote me on that’: the rights, wrongs and practicalities of ‘coming out’ as an ethnographer and gaining informed consent

The covert/overt dichotomy is often employed in sociology to distinguish between different observational stances. In overt research, an ethnographer makes a commitment to inform participants about the nature of the study and gains their consent before continuing work. In covert studies, the researcher keeps his study a secret and while this is not always desirable it is sometimes a necessity in terms of safety and practicality.

My fieldwork experiences taught me that this overt/covert distinction is not a straightforward one. Atkinson has noted this in reference to his own research at a medical school when he was ‘an “open” observer with regard to the doctors and students… [but] ‘a “disguised” observer with regard to the patients’ (1981, p. 135). I encountered a similar imbalance where in some instances I was a visible researcher and in others I was an anonymous crowd member. In the following table, I adopt the range of observational stances provided by Gold (1958) to illustrate how the different roles I performed during fieldwork affected my visibility as a researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>My roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Complete observer</td>
<td>A member of the group being studied Group unaware of research</td>
<td>Radio show host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Participant as observer</td>
<td>A member of the group being studied Group aware of research</td>
<td>Some entrepreneurial/organizational activity; spending time socially with informants; Ill-Skill video shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Observer as participant</td>
<td>Limited participation Group aware of research</td>
<td>Rehearsals; preparing for shows; some entrepreneur/organizational activity; watching video shoots; accompany graffiti writers ‘tagging’; battles and ciphers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Complete participant</td>
<td>Participates fully Group unaware of research</td>
<td>Being an audience member at shows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Observer stances during fieldwork
There was a visible hip-hop scene in Cape Town so keeping my presence and purpose elusive to the majority of the research population was impossible. When I left the nucleus of this culture and entered spaces like music shops and large concerts and conducted more of a ‘street-style’ ethnography, it became impractical and unnecessary to tell everyone what I was doing. In these larger, public spaces the threat of intrusion is largely absent and I found gaining consent impractical in the same way Lynd and Lynd (1929) did in their famous studies of ‘Middletown’.

There were other reasons the idea of informed consent became troublesome during fieldwork. Understanding that the gold standard of consent forms would have been impractical in this study, I made a concerted effort to clarify any misunderstandings and be honest about my purpose when asked. I found difficulty however in articulating all the possible implications of my work to people outside academia and while I was pleased to gain consent, I became worried that this acceptance might not be the outcome of an informed deliberation. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest that the researcher should be honest, but not too technical or detailed, in explaining to participants what he is doing. Gaining consent is however an academic convention that is difficult and time consuming to communicate to some people in a way that they understand all the implications. This was emphasised to me during a meeting with a lecturer from the University of Cape Town who was also involved in the local hip-hop scene.

We met on campus and drove to a nearby café opposite a theatre in Rondebosh. We talked at length and he revealed to me some information about the future of the Redbull sponsored hip-hop programme and also some personal information about local DJs but then asked me not to write about any of it. Throughout the conversation he would occasionally qualify a statement by saying: ‘you can quote me on that’ or ‘that’s confidential’. I never encountered any other respondents being this guarded and it was perhaps because as an academic he could understand academic convention when others could not.

Fieldwork diary, 7th July 2007

4.5.4. Reciprocity during fieldwork and beyond

Ethical issues in qualitative research are rarely clear-cut and easy to resolve, partially because these matters are less visible and subtler than those encountered in quantitative work. As part of the research process, I endeavoured to befriend various
people I thought would benefit my study and this troubled me somewhat because in
different circumstance I would be considered a user: someone who makes friends only
because it benefits them in some way. This apprehension was exacerbated by my
knowledge that this research involved asymmetrical power dynamics and I did not
want to exploit my informants in any way. For this reason, I followed Wolcott’s
(2001) advice that the researcher should practice reciprocity in whatever terms
appropriate for that culture. In the pursuit of this ideal, I worked to help artists with
their hip-hop endeavours in any way I could and wrote copy for websites, sold CDs at
concerts, allowed people to use my flat as a rehearsal space and took photographs of
performances. I soon discovered that as I aimed to ‘give back’, it furthered my
immersion into the hip-hop scene and further aided the research.

Reciprocity in the ethnographic method is most often enacted in terms of unsolicited
altruism. However during this fieldwork, there was sometimes an expectation on me to
be generous. Partially this was the outcome of my British nationality causing many to
assume that I was wealthy or at least have plenty of disposable income. This
manifested itself in the expectation that I would buy rounds of drinks in bars and be
available to provide small ‘loans’ when the occasion demanded and I remember one
informant telling another: ‘Gary’s got pounds, he’s sound’. This put me in an awkward
situation and reminded me of the international and monetary differentials between the
research population and myself.

Shaffir et al serve a clear warning to would-be ethnographers:

Personal commitments to those we study often accompany our research
activity. Subjects often expect us to continue to live up to such
commitments pertinently. On completing the research, however, our
commitment subsides and is often quickly overshadowed by other
considerations shaping our day-to-day lives. When our subjects become
aware of our diminished interest in their lives and situations, they may

The asymmetrical relationship between an ethnographer and informants is often
compounded by the fleeting presence the researcher has in the field. Inspired by
Letkemann (1980, p. 300) who ten years after leaving the field, and almost a thousand
miles away, still kept informed about the welfare of his subjects, I committed myself
to on-going reciprocity and post-fieldwork obligation. This responsibility is of course
a lot easier than it has been in previous decades, before the tremendous advancements
in telecommunications and Internet communication and after I had returned to the UK, through the use of email and social networking websites, I found it easy, cheap and convenient to maintain contact. Contact was also aided by many of my contacts choosing to visit the UK for travel, study or hip-hop related work. I was most happy to provide the Mad Hatter a bed to sleep in when he visited London as his parents provided a place for me to sleep during a week of fieldwork. Below is a photograph of time we both spent in my parents’ home in London.

![Figure 4.14. Aiden and me at my parents’ home in London](image)

4.6. Epistemological and philosophical reflections on researching within the ethnographic tradition

4.6.1. Ethnographic understanding

The World of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not “mean” anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist – social reality – has a specific meaning and relevance structure for beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this
world which they experience as a reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects constructed by the social scientist; in order to grasp this social reality that have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the commonsense thinking of men, living their daily life within the social world (Schutz 1962, p. 59).

The above quote provided by Schutz, allows us to reflect upon the epistemology of ethnography. The knowledge that this method provides allows us to incorporate the understanding that human action is meaningful to people and that they act upon the meaning they ascribe to their action and the action of others. Ethnography also distinguishes itself from other methods in that it allows the researcher to observe nonverbal expressions of feelings, determine who interacts with whom and grasp how participants communicate with each other (Schmuck 1997). DeWalt and DeWalt judge that:

The goal or design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method (2002, p. 96).

They authors further emphasize that participant observation increases validity because observations give the researcher a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study.

Ethnography provides a lens to look at actions, interpret them and their social world and as an outcome of this, there is a general tendency to embrace empathy and strive to see through the eyes of others. However, seeing through the eyes of others can be difficult and perhaps unrealistic at times. Fielding for instance, when carrying out research on the far right National Front party sought to suppress his own feeling of revulsion towards their beliefs in order to fully examine their position. In the process of telling it like it was for them, he produced an account where outsiders could understand the ideology’s persuasiveness (1982, p. 83). Similarly, when Armstrong carried out an ethnographic study of Sheffield United football hooligans he located his work in ‘Verstehende sociology – trying to think of oneself in the situations of the people one is interested in’ (Armstrong 1993, p. 5). Following this, Taylor (1993) in her ethnographic study of female intravenous drug users highlighted the influence of Weber’s Verstehen: ‘in order to grasp and understand social actions we must grasp the meaning that actors attach to their actions (1993, p. 7).
When discussing epistemological issues in ethnographic research, it is unavoidable to compare such issues with those faced in quantitative methods. While ethnography renders replication and repeat testing impossible it has the advantage of allowing the ethnographer to experience everything firsthand. Throughout fieldwork, I was privy to numerous conversations about topics that concerned the study but that I had not instigated. Ethnography therefore allowed me to get a clearer picture of things as they emerge directly from respondents.

It is inescapable that to a degree, ethnography, guided by events that are in a constant state of flux and relying on subjective interactions, is vulnerable to misguided human interpretation. When we incorporate another person’s experiences in our work, there are decisions about who to trust and any knowledge gained must be understood as partial and incomplete. Researching with groups also provides the problem of conformity as in these situations actors are more likely to express what is common for all. The weakness of this is that there might be a significant elephant in the room (especially involving sensitive subjects like race), which no one wants to mention that subsequently get neglected. One way of testing out if you are fair to your subjects is to feed back to your subjects and I have remained in close contact with research informants and had numerous conversations regarding the direction of my thesis.

Johnson and Sackett (1998) have criticized ethnography for being a source of erroneous description. They note that information collected by ethnographers is never representative of the culture and a lot that is collected is based on the interest of the researcher. In this framework, an ethnographic text might tell us more about the ethnographer than the culture under study. For evidence, Johnson and Sackett (1998) point to researchers frequently writing about religious and political activities and neglecting things like eating and drinking which take up more of people’s lives and they believe this discrepancy skews descriptions of cultural activities. A further disadvantage of ethnography is that it assumes the principal research interest is primarily affected by community cultural understandings. It is therefore the central role of the researcher to comprehend these cultural understandings and the disadvantage of this is that it can overestimate the role of cultural perceptions and underestimate the causal role of objective forces. This goes to the heart of the epistemological issue around the kind of data an ethnographer gathers. Much recent
ethnography has given weight to the idea that evidence and insights are about discourses. This is partly due to the theoretical influence of Foucault but also due to a recognition that fieldwork data is based largely on verbal accounts of life – the narrative, the remembered, the perception and the representation. This emphasis has much strength but it is limited in its potential for studying large-scale causality in processes. The point here is not that local understandings are the end of analysis, but that they are the necessary precondition as a start for the analysis. They are necessary but not sufficient.

4.6.2. Reflexivity and objectivity

Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining “outside of” one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research" (Nightingale and Cromby 1999, p. 228).

Reflexivity requires the researcher to carefully examine the power relations and politics in the research process, data collection and interpretation (Jones et al 1997; Falconer Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002). This process asks the researcher to be explicit about their own role in the research and especially the partiality and biases that they bring to it. This way of thinking has had a significant affect on ethnography and signalled a departure from the ideology of objectivity and distance (Marcus 1995).

The focus on reflexivity in ethnography is justified because of the strong connection to a research setting and intimate relationships that often characterize it. This means that there is, compared to other methods, a greater potential for the researcher’s social positionality and the research process itself to affect the outcome of a study. This development has not signalled a simple 'goodbye to objectivity’ but rather heralded a recognition that objectivity is a chimera in research methodology premised upon using the self as the key instrument of data collection.
While it is impossible to provide perfect knowledge of a researcher’s position within the research (Rose 1997), it is still important to acknowledge the influence of positionality. My own social identity as a young, white, heterosexual Englishman certainly affected interactions with research participants, bringing both positive and negative prejudicial attitudes. This section continues by assessing the impact of these identity signifiers and concludes by discussing the impact my presence has had on the overall research environment.

On some levels, I could claim insider status by sharing a similar age, (official) language, sexuality and gender with the majority of research participants. Feminist qualitative research has asserted that there is the benefit of a natural rapport when women interview women (e.g. Coterrill 1992; Minister 1991 and Ribbens 1989) and my own shared status afforded me a level of affinity with potential informants. Similar to the assertions that DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) have made that that male and female researchers innately have access to different information because they have access to different people, settings and bodies of knowledge, I found that most importantly, my gender eased access to a male-dominated hip-hop scene. Other authors like Schacht (1997) in her research in the traditional male setting of the rugby club, have found great difficulty in immersing themselves in an arena where their gender is a minority.49

Race was a further significant issue. Some authors have highlighted the problems a white researcher might encounter when studying a black population. Lawrence (1981) for instance has shown that white people might struggle to understand and empathize the experience of being black, and Song and Parker (1995) have shown that qualitative researchers of different ethnic backgrounds will elicit different responses from the same respondents asking the same questions. My race explicitly made my informants treat me differently than others; I was often the only white person in a group and on one occasion when others were worried about an informant smoking marijuana in a car, he reassured the others by arguing: ‘they [the police] won’t stop us with Gary [a white person] in the car’. At another time, Lolo asked me to fly-post the local area, believing that because of my skin colour, I would not be arrested. My race

49 Back (1996) also relays his experiences of being accused of ‘chatting up’ female respondents when talking to them one on one.
therefore had a visible and significant impact on dialogue and the way I was treated during research.

While many writers have documented the problems associated with unequal international research relationships (e.g. Merrifield 1995, Robson and Willis 1994; Townsend 1995), others have shown how it can provide opportunities (Herod 1999; Mullings 1999; Sabot 1999). At times my nationality was treated as exotic and it created interest, revealing that white people are not always perceived as a homogeneous group (Ignatiev 1995). My experiences taught me that I was definitely treated differently than a white South African would be and by being English, people assumed I was neutral in terms of local politics of race. However, this acceptance did not quarantine me from the power imbalances that resulted in me coming from a country in the North.

It is appropriate here to mention again the Hawthorne effect, where respondents change their behaviour when they know they are being studied. I discovered that my opinions were not always regarded as inconsequential to the people I studied and at times informants took measures to manipulate what I discovered. For instance, at times someone would interject a conversation I was having and say something like: ‘Hey, don’t say that because you’re going to give Gary a bad impression’. I was able to overcome this eventually, and get more than publically rehearsed statements as informants got to know me better and began to trust me. This illustrates the importance and value of prolonged fieldwork for precisely this reason.

While it is important to ‘give voice’ to research participants, it is naive to believe that these accounts are produced in a vacuum without the influence of the researcher’s presence (Bennett and Shurmer-Smith 2002). My presence undoubtedly affected the behaviour of informants because I became part of the scene I was researching. Consequently, I was often asked advice on a variety of issues relating to business and music and while I was happy to give my opinion when asked, I rejected repeated attempts from informants to try and organize shows or act as an official music manager. Although wanting to reduce my impact, I did provide one artist with funds

Ignatiev’s (1995) study of social life in the nineteenth century shows that Irish people were treated as separate from other white people.
in the commissioning of a graffiti piece to welcome my girlfriend to Cape Town. Below is Midus, making a start on the outline and him with the finished piece.

Figure 4.15. Midus begins work on my commissioned piece, ‘Welcome 2 Cape Town’
Attempts to be objective in ethnography are difficult because the researcher is so closely involved with the people and places under study. It is a major advantage of ethnography that it can capture the character of naturally occurring human behaviour but this first-hand and intimate contact means that the ethnographer should do his best to be objective about the people being studied.

 Reflexivity and objectivity are closely related terms because reflexive thinking asks us to consider questions of objectivity, namely the extent to which the research account is unbiased, fair and factual. This issue is significant to ethnography because there can be an illusion of candidness that everything reported has actually happened and accurate because the researcher has been directly exposed to it. While bias was reduced in my study by the collection of data in numerous ways and in different sites, a level of it was unavoidable. Spending so much time, side-by-side with informants, meant that I inevitably gained a greater affinity with some. On one level, this meant that I tended to gravitate towards people I liked and avoided those I did not, and on another, it meant that I treated some with more sympathy and empathy in my research.
findings. In a similar way, Bloor observed that because many approaches to research result in relationships developing between the researcher and those being researched of ‘fondness and mutual regard’, there might be a reluctance to be critical (1997, p. 45).

Throughout fieldwork, prolonged social interaction meant that occasionally it was hard for me to maintain a passive role and I was compelled to act, help or denounce informants. After a year of close interaction emotions inevitably got involved and empathy developed. The experiences of my respondents became interlocked with mine and non-partisanship and detachment became unrealistic. It was not my aim to keep a lid firmly on my emotions; not only would this have been a fruitless exercise but it also neglect the fact that emotions might provide insight which could latter either back up or contradict the evidence I collected. Ethnography distinguishes itself from other methods in being a personal experience that is shaped by participants and the researcher’s relationship to them. You become interested, partisan and embedded in their worlds, and therefore have to speculate about how your presence might affect the situations encountered and how personal feelings towards people and places filters the interpretation and understanding of events.

Pursuing ethnography is rarely a straightforward exercise. Throughout the research process, developments occur that affect how the research is conducted, where it can be pursued and with whom. In short, serendipity is central to the ethnographer’s experience and it is almost impossible to foresee the variety of practical challenges and ethical dilemmas that a researcher will encounter. This chapter has communicated the journey I took and routes I pursued while negotiating these unexpected obstacles and opportunities as they developed. Due to the disorientating experience of venturing into the unknown, it becomes important to pay heed to intuition and guide research decisions by a set of principles rather than rigid guidelines that cannot apply to every eventuality.

4.7. Reflections on method

A year after completing fieldwork I returned to Cape Town in order to embark upon a brief fellowship at the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town.
During this period I presented a seminar outlining some of my research findings and took advantage to catch up with my research respondents, many of who had become friends and stayed in close contact with me. This visit also provided the opportunity to reflect upon my methods.

Initially, I saw the prospect of a seminar as the perfect opportunity to feed back some of my findings to participants and communicate to them the overall shape of my project. After inviting many, I became disappointed that only one turned up and at first put this down to the notorious unreliability of hip-hop performers and the fact that many would have struggled to get to and from the venue. However, after talking to some I realised that while being interested in my research and keen to learn how I was progressing, most saw me as something other than an academic researcher whom they had a formalized relationship with. Instead they regarded me as a friend, colleague or at the very least an acquaintance, and almost showed an ambivalence towards the academic dissemination of my findings. This highlighted to me the way respondents in a ‘street style’ ethnography can be uninterested in post-fieldwork obligations as they are often presented in the methodological literature and more concerned with the responsibilities of being a friend, like the importance of keeping in contact when I left, letting them know when I returned and offering advice and understanding when sought. This also reveals how boundaries between research relationships and friendships can be blurred after prolonged ethnographic contact.

Due to the brief nature of my visit, I stayed for a period in a youth hostel in central Cape Town and early on I invited two of my friends/respondents around for a braai. While sitting around the fire, these two MCs, as was common for them, broke into a verse of one of their songs (‘backpack anthem’). To capture the moment for posterity, I filmed the pair’s performance and didn’t think about the episode until later when another guest brought it up, a white middle-aged female who worked for a charity based in Khayelitsha Township. She said that after watching me film she became worried that I was in some way exploiting or taking advantage of the rappers but was reassured by the barmaid that they were friends of mine. The way that her first reaction in seeing a white foreigner with two local black males was to worry about exploitation was very similar to the way research relationships and reciprocity are

\[BBQ\]
framed in the methodological literature. From another viewpoint, another observer might think I was being exploited: there were after all two of them and I had (happily) paid for the meat and charcoal! However, the casual and affable relationships formed over time meant that we were not concerned about who benefited specifically from each exchange.

This thesis continues by reviewing the literature that has informed the analysis of these ethnographic experiences.
Chapter 5. Community, solidarity and division in Cape Town hip-hop

5.1. The battle of the year

I climbed out of a bus one warm Saturday afternoon in March having arrived at the University of Cape Town Sports Centre. The building was located on the upper campus, a stone’s throw away from the Presidential mansion and on the slopes of Table Mountain, in an incredibly scenic and affluent area of town. I was there to watch the ‘battle of the year’, an annual breakdancing tournament which sends the winning team to represent South Africa in the world cup final of b-boying.\(^52\)

![University of Cape Town’s upper campus in Rondebosch](image)

Figure 5.1. University of Cape Town’s upper campus in Rondebosch

\(^52\) South Africa has a distinguished history in the competition, which is held in the German town of Braunschweig every year in an arena that holds 50,000 spectators. In 2000 the South African Allstars came fourth while in 1997 the Cape Town based crew Black Noise, came third. This tournament has gained wider recognition after becoming the subject of a successful documentary called ‘Planet b-boy’. 
I had made plans to arrive with Nick Knuckles, my co-host on a local radio show, but got a call from him earlier in the morning explaining that he hadn’t been to bed yet because the previous night had been ‘a bit hectic’. Although he wouldn’t be able to watch the breakdancing, he agreed to collect me after and drive to the gig he was DJing at Cool Runnings nightclub. The ‘hectic’ night Nick experienced was the outcome of attending a show headlined by Krush, a renowned Japanese hip-hop DJ and producer. The high cover charge had discouraged most of my friends and myself from turning up.

I was early for the crew battles so took a seat in the spectator stand and studied the breakdancing workshops below, where young devotees were busy acquiring the technical abilities necessary to become members of the b-boy fraternity. The first class, focusing on the tricky art of ‘popping and locking’ was led by a New Yorker called Gyno and the second session, focusing on ‘powermoves’ was taught by world b-boy champion Hong10, who had travelled from Seoul in South Korea to make a guest appearance at the event. Initially, Hong10’s instructions, delivered in broken English, caused a degree of frustration among the trainees but they were soon won over after he demonstrated some of the amazing feats in his repertoire. The dance moves acted as a lingua franca, connecting b-boys and b-girls from South Africa and Korea to the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983) of hip-hop.

Once Gyno’s dance tutorial finished, the instructor instigated further association with her new apprentices by encouraging them to note their email addresses on a clipboard being passed around. Traditionally, community has been defined as a group of people living in a common location but the development and spread of global communication and transport technologies (illustrated here by the use of email and the great distances travelled by the workshop instructors) has greatly reshaped the significance of place (Harvey 1989) and created the possibility to realize global ‘imagined’ connections among communities of interest.

A few hours passed before an organizer invited some of the young onlookers to climb onto the stage and make the human circle or cipher that hip-hop routines are traditionally enacted within. After the performers were welcomed on stage they soon occupied this territory and began to battle. The crowd voiced raucous joy at the sight of these urban gymnasts, gyrating rhythmically and launching themselves in eager
competition with their rivals. Intermittently, an official attempted to instigate more order to the proceedings, demanding that teams not jump in on each other’s timeslots, and later threatened disqualification when two opponents squared up to each other, pleading into his microphone that b-boys should: ‘just shut up and dance…just shut up and dance!’ While the workshops taught people the technical aspects of breakdance, this necessary intervention, greeted by an approving handclap by the disapproving crowd, worked to sanction and socialize the competitors into the appropriate behaviour of competition.

Before the winner was announced, having slept and partially recovered from the previous evening’s exertions, Nick arrived in his car to pick me up and we drove to the Jamaican themed nightclub where he was to DJ. I had really enjoyed watching all the breakdancing that day but was left feeling a little deflated when I learnt just a handful of my acquaintances at the gig (performers and audience members who were predominantly black) had heard of the ‘battle of the year’. One contact even dismissed it as an event for ‘weird coloured cats’ that wasn’t for him. This casual and distasteful remark encapsulated the deeply fragmented character of hip-hop in Cape Town: while the participants of the ‘battle of the year’ that day were mostly coloured, the makeup of the crowd at Cool Runnings was mostly black and Nick’s description of the listeners at the previous night’s hip-hop concert made it clear that the audience was predominantly white. I found it ironic and contradictory that while efforts were being made to establish links with other hip-hop heads around the world, like b-boy Hong10 from Seoul and Gyno from New York, people seemed so resigned to the fragmented nature of the local scene. Hip-hop groupings in the city seemed firmly rooted to apartheid era racial classification, almost working as separate black and coloured hip-hop fraternities operating within larger racial ones, or as separate communities contained within larger ones (Tropman et al 2006).

Although community has traditionally been used to conceptualize groupings within a specified geographical locale, I employ the term to discuss hip-hop as a ‘community of interest’ (Crow and Allan 1994) where individuals are grouped through sharing a common pursuit. Following Cohen’s (1985) work on the symbolic construction of community and Anderson’s (1983) Imagined Community, I explore community identity and also how people act upon this identification they have with others. The
Cape Town scene illustrates that communities are also arenas where divisions and conflicts are given expression and this facet is also explored. Analysing the social organization of Cape Town hip-hop, this chapter investigates the type of relationships practitioners have with each other and explores their rhetoric about solidarity and its absence. Through this purpose, I examine the sharing, divisions and efforts at integration within the city’s scene and how through the harnessing of modern communication and transport technologies, people are connecting to a world of hip-hop beyond their geographical proximity.

I begin this chapter by eliciting what affiliation to hip-hop in Cape Town brings in terms of a collective identity, solidarity, cooperation and collaboration. Even in the light of these positive qualities, practitioners in the city are shown to be deeply fragmented and the second section looks at the processes that create boundaries that work to exclude: these are identified as differentiation, inequality and discrimination. In light of this fragmentation, there have been some attempts to reconcile practitioners and the third section analyses the outcomes of these various internal and external efforts. The final section of this chapter explores how the processes of globalization have instigated the extension of hip-hop community and is further divided into three parts, concentrating on hip-hop networks that encroach upon other parts of Africa, onto other parts of the world, and those that exist in cyberspace.

5.2. Community membership

5.2.1. Collective identity

As the introduction to this chapter made explicit, hip-hop in Cape Town is deeply fragmented. However, one thing that all practitioners have in common is their collective identity as ‘heads’ and this is quality that connects my entire research sample. This is an important element to interrogate because as Willmott (1989) asserted a generation ago, the concept of a ‘shared identity’ should be central to any understanding of community and Cohen’s influential work around the theme agrees, arguing that human groupings should be approached as ‘community of meanings’ and researchers should strive to comprehend how they are symbolically constructed and used as a ‘referent of…identity’ (1985, p. 118). In exploring the collective identity
amongst those engaged with hip-hop culture in Cape Town, I analyse how outsiders label them as an ‘other’ and how they themselves articulate a sense of collectivism.

In Cape Town, being a hip-hop head puts a person in a discrete category in how others perceive them and this identity separates them from other youths in the region. A common theme that emerged from my interviews was that my sample were used to being labelled by others outside of the culture:

Arsenic: Hip-hop people gets put in a, in little boxes, all it’s like, we seem to be our own kind as well I suppose, you know? Oh he’s the hip-hop type? You know? But it’s cool.

**Interview extract**

Hatchet: you know, I’m cool with being labelled, ‘cos people just put labels on you so they can feel a bit more comfortable with themselves, so, I’m cool with all that shit, yeah.

**Interview extract**

Some of my informants who lived in Townships described that intermittently their neighbours, having no connection to music, voiced confusion over their clothing and lifestyle. The archetypal dress for a hip-hop head is baggy jeans, over-sized T-shirts, baseball cape and large headphones and most are also identified by spending their days pursuing various ‘hustles’ in pursuit of cultural production (this facet of behaviour is explored in the next chapter). This differentiation was revealed to me first hand when I accompanied a musician to a Gugulethu shebeen and witnessed everybody greet him with high-fives as ‘Mr. Hip-hop man’. In Cape Town, there seemed to be something truly distinctive and recognizable about being a hip-hop head and people within the music industry also singled them out from musicians located in other genres. This showed itself in their unfortunate reputation for being unreliable and I remember when arriving at the sound check for a concert with some of my sample, the venue’s sound engineer articulated genuine surprise that the group had turned up on time, saying: ‘Wow! You’re early, I can’t believe it. So I guess it’s not true what they say about hip-hop heads.’ Collective identity among this group is therefore achieved in part by the world external to hip-hop lumping them together.
Informants would also label themselves as different by using the moniker of ‘hip-hop head’, aligning themselves to the global hip-hop movement (this is described in greater detail in the final section of this chapter) but also claim that the Cape Town scene they were part of had a unique style and sound. The identity of belonging to a unique local scene was in part achieved by comparing themselves with others, like those in Johannesburg and the ones emanating from the United States, that they deem less authentic (these distinctions in understandings of authenticity are described at length in chapter 7). Indeed, most artists were at pains to stress that there was something crucially different about the hip-hop community in Cape Town, and the difference was overwhelmingly described as a positive.

Abstract: There is specifically a Cape Town sound, but there’s a, there’s a nature of the artist down here in Cape Town, you know. Cape Town artists what I notice is they really push boundaries, like, they don’t want to conform to other shit. Most of the artists that I know, you know.

Interview extract

Although often talking about the overall Cape Town scene as a single unit (in terms of understandings of authenticity, non-commercialism and the external view of them), in reality solidarity and collectivism rarely cut across racial divisions. Within black and coloured racial groups, collectivism manifested itself in the belief that all practitioners were in it together and shared a common situation. Although a clear example of wishful thinking and a classical justification of stardom that isn’t in self-interest, Sudan articulates a sense of togetherness by reasoning that if one local artist succeeds, the whole scene would benefit:

Sudan: The day that will come, you know, where one of us will shine for the rest of us, you know what I mean. Or even two of us, you know. If you are in New York, and there’s a Biggie you all feel you belong to that boy. You all feel like he’s representing you in some way because he's from your hood, you know. This is the diamonds that live amongst us you know what I mean? For once, there’s like one person they can do that, everyone becomes a star that leads the way, you know, and illuminates the path, you know, for everyone.

Interview extract
However, due to the fierce competition that was present among local practitioners, this sense of collectivism was often more of an ideology that a lived relationship and I return to this theme later in this chapter.

5.2.2. Solidarity and ubuntu

Ubuntu is a widespread traditional concept amongst black people in South Africa (although it is also articulated among coloured people) and can be used as a starting point to understand the solidarity among hip-hop performers. It can be summarised as positive interactions and customary obligations between individuals and is widely evoked in politics and business and seen to embody black African social values and to contrast against Western individualism (Mbigi and Maree 1995). Ubuntu was at times directly referenced during fieldwork and used to account for any display of generosity and solidarity. The type of engagement and expectation that others will act in a consistent, honest and appropriate was treated as a norm within racial groups but largely absent between them.

Solidarity was not evenly distributed and there were distinct levels among practitioners and as well as being dependent on race, also varied according to age and class. One way solidarity was shown was in performers attending each other’s concerts as presence itself was seen as an expression of togetherness and early on in fieldwork, I discovered that gigs were often entirely filled with fellow performers. To illustrate this point, I relay a conversation that occurred between an associate and myself during a show I attended:

Carwell: Have you noticed that everyone at this gig is an MC?
Gary: I’m not.
Carwell: You don’t count Gary.

Informal conversation

In this context the difference between producers and consumers of hip-hop was virtually non-existent and this reality did not escape the attention of practitioners. After spending time engaging with these musicians, I quickly realized that although
obligation played a part, the main reason for supporting one another was because people felt a genuine fondness towards each other and enjoyed time spent together. Lee expressed his enjoyment of associating or ‘kicking it’ with fellow musicians:

Lee Urses: Any moment in hip-hop is nice to me...but a nice moment always happens to see all these different crews together...and us kicking it! That’s nice...that’s always a nice thing.

Interview extract

While a sense of solidarity certainly arises from social activities, the reverse is also true and many social activities arose out of a sense of solidarity. Social activities were fundamental in facilitating prolonged contact with fellow members of the scene and it struck me that black practitioners in the city seemed to know almost all other black performers and coloured practitioners seemed to know all other coloureds. For this reason, I soon realized that keeping my role and purpose elusive was virtually impossible, as the ‘bush telegraph’ informed most of my presence. SOV and Jimmy explain this extraordinary familiarity:

SOV: Everyone knows everyone...like, if ever you meet one cat, that cat will know that cat. That’s cool for me, that’s the way they connect.

Interview extract

Jimmy: I love how it brings people together. I might not know you but hip-hop will bring us together.

Informal conversation

It is often through the act of hustling, defined in chapter 6 as any activity that works to further one’s hip-hop career, that a lot of this social networking and community building within ethnicities occurred. Often different crews met at performances, in studios, clubs, bars and pubs and friendships develop over years and were facilitated through everyday concerns, shared experiences and goals. These contacts developed into a networks of exchange and support with different actors offering each other advice and mentoring; passing on knowledge, information and encouragement about a variety of hip-hop activities.

As well as shared activities, solidarity also arose from practitioners sharing a common
situation and of course a common interest in hip-hop. The shared experiences of financial hardship and the common experience of hustling reinforced solidarity by fostering generosity, camaraderie and friendship. Informants often went to great lengths in help each other and I remember well that a respondent spent a whole weekend collecting and delivering equipment so his friend should stage a hip-hop show. When I asked him why he had gone to such lengths and he simply replied:

X the 24th Letter: We all love hip-hop. We are hip-hop heads, that’s why we gotta help each other out.

Interview extract

Hechter (1987) asserted that a sense of obligation should be central to understandings of group solidarities. For X the 24th letter, helping fellow hip-hop heads was a taken for granted behaviour and in this way acted as an obligation and this source of mutual support was highly valued among informants. Although expressing a desire to go solo and admitting to often being left frustrated by the unreliable members in his crew, Lolo and others highlighted the immense support he receives to be a price worth paying, describing his fellow (unrelated) crew members as brothers:

Lolo: I share my life with those brothers; you know what I’m saying. …whether you like it or not, sometimes like love forbids you from kicking your brother…because he’s your brother! You know what I’m saying? Not that you necessarily see eye to eye on everything, but if you’ve got support there that force brothers to support you in certain things; you know what I’m saying?

Interview extract

Giving of gifts also occurred regularly, when a people contributed to others without the expectation of receiving corresponding recompense. In reality this could entail something insignificant like buying a local CD, even if you do not like the music and Slew describes how he felt compelled to buy a new album involving some of his acquaintances even though he did not like it:

Gary: What do you think of the Planetary Assault album?

Slew Dadda: No comments…I bought it in order to support it but I don’t play it much. I like certain guys who rap on there but I don’t like the songs that they…I don’t like the tracks that they are on so, I don’t know how I can like the CD too much. I’m not saying it’s a piece of trash but I’m not
Another common form of support towards other musicians was a willingness to perform at a gig without financial recompense:

Jaak: I’ll do a show for free anytime; if it’s for a charity I’m there. If it’s for my boy, ‘Yo, can you do this?’ I’m there.

During fieldwork, I also witnessed more meaningful forms of obligation. While sleeping on my couch after an international tour, MC Ben Sharpa fell into a diabetic coma and subsequently had to be treated in the local hospital by a dialysis machine. I was genuinely surprised at the speed with which word spread and the degree of spontaneous support showed by fellow heads who quickly gathered to find out what was happening and to see if there was anything they could do to help. Spo0ky documented the event and posted the photographs on her personal website.

Figure 5.2. Ben Sharpa’s support gathering

Ben Sharpa made a full recovery.
5.2.3. Cooperation and collaboration

Cooperation and collaboration are ways that people work together to achieve a specific goal and these complementary practices are a defining feature of hip-hop and after spending time with musicians in Cape Town, I soon discovered that these acts resonated with their experiences and was also a highly valued aspect of their work. For instance, while being short of time and after just completing his debut solo album, SOV still showed a commitment to collaborate with others and a disappointment that other pressures (such as a very demanding girlfriend and University course) prevented him from entering into more collaborative projects:

SOV: Werder…I actually want to do a track with him but time just…I don’t know what the fuck happened. And then like, 3 months back I wanted to get Dumas to do one as well but yo, time, bro, is just an issue the last couple of months.

Interview extract

Because hip-hop is an example of an intentional community, it is more likely that members share similar goals and there is therefore more of a chance for people to work together in achieving them. Cooperation most often occurred in short term projects and enacted informally, common instances of this was the sharing of resources, such as a studio, which often became a collective asset others could draw upon:

Arsenic: I’ve got a little bedroom studio from home as well, that I do most of the crew’s recordings. I just love recordings and obviously other crews around Cape Town [record there too]. The way Metalloids [Arsenic’s production projects] is set up is sort of that anything goes.

Interview extract

By making it available to others, the inexhaustible resource of the studio becomes a public good. However, like solidarity much of the collaboration and cooperation I witnessed during fieldwork was mainly enacted within racial groups and not between them. Working together was also not always framed as an altruistic act. For instance, Arsenic reasoned that the extra experience of having people record at his home would develop his own production skills and make his future releases superior. This shows

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54 This is reflected in the Grammys presenting an award for best hip-hop collaboration since 1992.
an instance where gifting and self interest are completely entwined.

Arsenic: It’s all practice mans. Everything is practicing for my next thing. You get me?

Interview extract

The opposite of co-operation is working alone and for many the relatively high associational costs of hip-hop production (the various strategies employed to overcome this obstacle are described in chapter 6) make this alternative at best unattractive and at worst impossible. In the following quote Jaak describes how his affiliations with other hip-hop producers meant that he could record with established artists with little personal cost incurred:

Jaak: Scabs used to stay in Paarl, him and Wordy they used to liaise, they used to be baddies, so Scabs came through with this joint (song) they explained it to me and I was like blown. A guy like that and I was like ‘Yo Scabs, I need to work with you’. So, they came through one Saturday and we talked and we did some tracks at Switchblade’s place, because he also produced and I think they felt my skill! I have to say it, but yes, he felt the skill and when he was starting to release his albums, he approached MC and Isaac Newton to do this one. That’s how it happened.

Interview extract

A lot of cooperation, like Jaak has described, is fleeting and allows complementary skills to combine in the short term for a single specified project. Jaak never worked with these individuals again but agreed that it was a worthwhile experience nonetheless. Collaboration implies a longer-lasting relationship and most often this was conceived within more intimate friendship networks. The following diary extract highlights this perception. There was a belief between a group of friends that they should all work together to get one artist established at a time.

We started to discuss the music career of Yanga and someone said after Sudan, he would ‘make it’. Yanga used the example of two airplanes wanting to leave an aircraft hanger and stressed the important thing was to get one plane in the air first, letting the ground staff to fully concentrate on its safe take off. Once it was up in air and everything was going well, the second plane will take off. There seems to be optimism among these guys and a real belief that Sudan is going to do well. Yanga and the others believes that if Sudan becomes successful, it will be easier for him because they derive from the same stable.

Fieldwork Diary, 19th February 2007
Displaying such a strong commitment to a common mission involves a greater degree of planning than other cooperative efforts like the production of a single track. There is also greater risk in pursuing this strategy and subsequently it will only be enacted if the parties have an overlapping interest, there are positive memories of passed teamwork experiences and a high prospect of future encounters.

While I have presented in this section the positive experiences characterized by having a solidarity, cooperation and collaboration, I have also shown how they are largely absent between hip-hop performers belonging to different racial groups. In the following section I analyses the processes that have worked to create this division.

5.3. Boundary creation and exclusionary practices

Like many communities, I found the one that surrounded hip-hop practice in Cape Town hip-hop to have divisions and factions and this section sets out more explicitly the fragmented and divided nature of the Cape Town hip-hop community.

5.3.1. Differentiation

Cohen argued that community contains two implications. First, that members have something in common with each other and also that this distinguishes them fundamentally from members of other groups (1985, p. 12). Features of the apartheid city still persist in Cape Town and may have even become starker since the first democratic elections and the formation of a multiracial government (Pieterse 2004; Turok 2001) and this is the most significant contributory factor in the hip-hop community being largely divided along black and coloured lines. My informants often referred explicitly to this division:

Julian: I think it’s still divided! It’s still very divided!

Interview extract

Chapter 3 demonstrated that in Cape Town, geographical location along with the
cultural, financial, social and linguistic resources an individual can draw upon is largely determined by race. Reflecting on this reality, Arsenic, on page 62 describes how black and coloured hip-hop heads come from ‘different walks of life’. The historical mutual suspicion between different races in the city means that musicians are often unwilling to venture into each other’s territories and as a consequence, hip-hop public performances have become separated.

Coloured and black hip-hop heads within my fieldwork site were further separated in the languages they could draw upon. While English is the lingua franca in Cape Town, black people are more likely to speak isiXhosa in their homes and coloured people are most likely to speak Afrikaans. This is not necessarily an active policy of exclusion but a further point of division nonetheless.

Julian: “Cape Town is divided along colour but also language lines because that’s where the language lines are the colour lines…And, there’s great hip-hop out there on either side and there is no reason why we can’t bring them together and the two factions can enjoy each others style.”

**Interview extract**

Artists like Slew Dadda assert that the use of different languages in hip-hop inevitably works to separate because it is a barrier to understanding the meaning of songs;

Gary: “So, do you listen to hip-hop in any other languages other than English?”

Slew Dadda: “I don’t understand a lot of shit, brother. I understand Afrikaans and I write Afrikaans hip-hop in like things funny and comical. I write some Afrikaans hip-hop that’s deep but, I don’t know how people are going to buy that shit really. I’ve heard mad Xhosa and Zulu raps, but leave it because I can’t understand that shit.”

**Interview extract**

Another MC neatly summed it up when he confided: ‘Rhyming in isiXhosa creates barriers for me Gary, straight up’. Language is a key identity marker in South Africa and it is unrealistic to expect MCs to rhyme in a language they are unfamiliar with. However, the sharing of a common language showed itself to be a clear motivational factor in MCs gravitating towards each others. Jaak describes how he is starting up a record label that will exclude all but coloured Afrikaans-speaking acts:
Jaak: So, what we’re planning now is doing, with his funding, is starting … South Africa’s first Afrikaans’s hip hop independent label.

*Interview extract*

It is largely race however and not language that is the strongest point of division among people in Cape Town and most of my informants comprehended this as the main reason the hip-hop scene was so fragmented:

Lolo: Like right now, there’s a big gap between….race plays a part in it in…uh, the different cliques.

*Interview extract*

There are certain experiences that are explicitly tied to being black or coloured in Cape Town. For instance, the black group Driemanskap used the imagery of traditional Xhosa dancers in a scene for the music video ‘Camagu’, that coloured performers could never have incorporated.

![Figure 5.3. Traditional dancers in the ‘Camagu’ music video](image)

After seeing the same group perform one night, I reasoned that they must have had a
change of image because instead of the jeans and T-shirts I was used to seeing them wear, they were all dressed in blazers, smart trousers and neat shoes. I later discovered however, that this ‘change of image’ was the outcome of them following the established requirements of the Xhosa circumcision ritual that necessitates that males dress formally for a period of a year in order to mark their transition into manhood\textsuperscript{55}. This important rite of passage was a further point of division between young male hip-hop performers in the city and worked to distinguish the style of some black performers

Julian argues that the prerequisites of authenticity discourses in hip-hop (described further in chapter 7) connects people more strongly with their ethnicity and reinforces the internal hip-hop division in Cape Town.

\begin{quote}
Julian: I think it [hip-hop] grows local culture because, I mean, the local artists draw from their own roots. I mean not everyone…there is always that faction that is trying to copy America. They are, as I said, a derivative of that culture. But, there are hip-hop artists that talk about their problems; they talk about their culture, their past, their heritage.
\end{quote}

\textbf{Interview extract}

While people compete for international audiences that are engulfed by different hip-hop styles from all corners of the world, there is a motivation for performers to display identity markers so people can distinguish them from others. Robertson (1995) has argued that the motivation to display symbols of locality and ethnicity have been heightened in the era of globalization because modern global developments go hand in hand with a greater sensitivity to local differences. Similarly, Featherstone suggests that one consequence of increased interaction to be ‘a disturbing sense of engulfment and immersion’, causing a retreat back towards other ethnic, national and traditional identities (1993, p. 174). This differentiation is constantly reinforced through common practices organized by social relationships and the allocation of

\textsuperscript{55} Young Xhosa men go through this ceremony in adolescence, it is a way of marking the transition of status from boy to man. The initiation is characterized by three stages: preparation for seclusion, the seclusion and the initiate coming out as a man. It includes an extended period of exclusion and doesn’t happen in the other major tribal group in South Africa (Zulu). Those Xhosa’s who haven’t gone through the experience aren’t considered as a man (Ngxamngxa 1971). Throughout my fieldwork, this was referred to as ‘going to the bush’, and my Xhosa informants would talk proudly about their experience but without giving much detail away. The ritual is surrounded by privacy and the experience is something only shared with friends who are fellow Xhosas.
5.3.2. Inequality and competition

Coloured and black hip-hop practitioners in Cape Town are not only divided, they are also deeply unequal. Abstract describes this inequality in terms of distribution of resources which results in only one portion of society thriving:

Abstract: The inequality, the inequality distribution of resources...there’s so much missing...just proper basic stuff, you know...because only one side of the society is thriving right now, you know...it might be a different country post ’94 where everything is equal but c’mon, look around you...there’s none of that there.

Interview extract

How does this affect hip-hop production? The great internal wealth disparities mean that some expensive elements of hip-hop like DJing and graffiti art are more likely to be the preserve of wealthier coloured heads. Macho asserts that the high associational cost of graffiti made him abandon his promising career and resulted in him focusing on MCing:

Macho: Before MCing, yeah, I was tagging! I was a graff cat long time. I had a crew called AVG, there was five of us but then, kids grew up and grew out of it, you know...They knew that OK, it’s quite expensive, like you get, you usually get a spray paint for 40 bucks back then.

Gary: And to do a decent piece you need a lot of cans.

Macho: To do a very decent piece, so, you know in a way that was quite a de-motivation, ’cos I knew I could rap, you know, but I never thought about writing a song or anything like that. I would come through and freestyle and cats are freestyling, but I never really thought about re-stepping the stage, or writing a whole song and going to the studio and doing.

Interview extract

Warren et al (2001) demonstrate how social capital is most usefully understood as a collective asset and a characteristic of a group, rather than a characteristic of an individual. It follows that coloured hip-hop practitioners have richer associations to
draw from because they have associations to people with more money and more sophisticated musical equipment than their black counterparts. Amongst black hip-hop heads the conditions of mutual relative poverty worked to heighten the significance of community (Moser 1996) as individuals shared these experiences and entered into more collaborative projects out of financial pragmatism. Uno describes how his crew joined another, pooled their resources and contacts to produce a joint mix tape because at that point in their career, neither of them could do it on their own:

Uno: We had to join together, we was quite close, I came up with the idea to… [put] together a mixed tape you know, and I knew a guy who had like a means of pressing our CDs. So I approached him and he did that for us. We pressed about 20 copies first and sold them around you know. And now, we’ve sold about 800 copies.

Interview extract

As the background chapter expressed, people’s friendship groups in Cape Town are often ethnically exclusive and if not explicitly forming crews, cliques within these black and coloured ethnic groups emerge and provide a mutual support system.

A further difference between black and coloured hip-hop heads is that black appropriation centres on rapping because it is cheaper to practice and at the time of black appropriation (in the 1990s) MCing had taken over the other elements in terms of media exposure. In other words, black hip-hop practitioners are not getting exposed to graffiti and breakdancing in the same way coloured youths are.

While hip-hop in South Africa has a lot more exposure in the media than it used to, most people living in the Townships surrounding Cape Town do not have DSTV\textsuperscript{56} or an Internet connection to watch the latest videos. Most often hip-hop music is copied from MP3s or CDs and passed on among friends. While my contacts had an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of hip-hop, the method of receiving music fourth, fifth and sixth hand created a time lag and restricted the range of music they could listen to and caused them to tend to listen to older styles of hip-hop from well established artists and rarely have an up to date understanding of the latest sounds and groups coming from the United States and Europe. This mode of circulation was more likely amongst black enthusiasts who had less financial freedom and as hip-hop circulation is a social

\textsuperscript{56} The South African satellite broadcaster.
practice, black and coloured hip-hop novices inevitably come to listen to different hip-hop artists.

Hip-hop was generally seen amongst my informants as a competitive endeavour and this competitiveness often transcended the racial rivalry I have described, often being played out inside racial classification. This was a further strong point of division and I remember vividly that at one open-air concert organized by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the announcer explicitly and repeatedly encouraging Cape Town acts to be less competitive. Often the aggressive posturing endemic in hip-hop ‘battles’ or competitions aided the feuding between artists. Below is a picture of MC Yanga being challenged for a battle spontaneously by an unknown MC. These battles often got personal and aggressive.

![Figure 5.4. Yanga is challenged to a battle](image-url)
5.3.3. Discrimination

Discrimination means treating someone of a certain group differently than others. Racial identity can help explain the preference people have for people like them and this can lead to favouritism towards other members of that group and discrimination against non-members. This discrimination can also work within racial groups and Slew Dadda describes how he was not afforded the same benefits as older generations of hip-hop heads:

Slew Dadda: You know, I hate not being taken as fucking seriously as I take this shit because there are other fucking fools who think they are clever…because either they’ve been doing it for longer or they know people who have been doing it for longer. Fuck that shit! That’s not fucking hip-hop.

Interview extract

Counter intuitively, the growing area of whiteness studies (e.g. Fine et al 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Kincheloe and Steinberg 1998; Nakayama and Krizek 1999; Twine and Warren 2000; Nayak 2007) can help explain how dominant and non-dominant communities shape the hip-hop scene in Cape Town. Whiteness studies understand the dynamics of exclusion by explaining how groups in relative privilege engage in practices to retain that advantage.

Due to their long participation in hip-hop, older, coloured heads have more contact and support from commercial, governmental and charitable organizations and have been relatively successful in gaining finance from city, state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct educational workshops based around hip-hop. These older heads work as a local power elite, allowing some to advance and blocking opportunities for others. Hatchet explains because he is not part of this elite he is not given ‘proper sets’ and is discriminated against by ‘big companies’:

Hatchet: They don’t give you like proper sets. Like, they have these huge parties that are like sponsored and blah blah blah…all these kinds of events that are sponsored by these big companies but, if you propose with a similar kind of proposal in the lines of hip-hop, they don’t give it to you…unless you’ve been doing this shit for 20 years and your name is Black Noise and you make hot sounding hip hop music. Do you know

Frankenberg (1993, p. 236) defines this as ‘the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage’.

57
what I mean? Like, they make…fucking corporations make a joke out of the hip-hop shit.

**Interview extract**

There was a strong feeling amongst black artists, that older and more established coloured artists also hoarded important information especially regarding local and international funding opportunities, in order to maintain their position.

Arsenic: I feel that when people are getting the information, they’re kind of keeping it to themselves…like hip-hop is divided…

**Interview extract**

I asked an established coloured artist, Ed, directly about this widely articulated accusation. He had anticipated the question and immediately responded: ‘people make excuses - they (black artists) never turn up for the meetings or apply online! It’s no secret’. My experiences with black artists did not square with Ed’s accusation. Most did not know where to start looking for this kind of information and believe this knowledge was hoarded greedily:

Mercy: You shouldn’t try and just sell knowledge. You know, if you can, I’d rather prefer you give the knowledge to the next person as much as it was also given to you, passed on to you.

**Interview extract**

Whether or not these accusations of opportunity hoarding (Tilly 1999) are true is less important than the fact that they are widely held beliefs and discourage people from entering into cooperative efforts across the racial divide. The most important manifestation of discrimination for my black respondents was that they were not asked to perform at large concerts organized by this power elite:

Lolo: Emile is gonna be squealing at me about being African and stuff…and yet, I hardly ever see any African people at his gigs, you know…let alone performing at his gigs! It’s for his community and his people…his own community out there.

**Interview extract**
This opportunity hoarding leads to durable inequality (Tilly 1999) between the two hip-hop communities in Cape Town. As individuals learn of opportunities, they pass word among friends and relatives and this fences opportunities from others. Because coloured hip-hop has been more institutionalized and co-opted by public bodies, they gain advantage by connecting to network with greater resources and these closed-off groups reinforce coloured and black identity as a basis for everyday relations in Cape Town.

5.4. Fostering community

The previous section ‘Boundary creation and exclusionary practices’ paints a bleak and pessimistic picture of the ethnic division of Cape Town hip-hop. However there has been some work (both internally and externally) to integrate these groups and this section analyses these efforts and assesses their varied success.

5.4.1. Internal initiatives

To many hip-hop heads, the division between black and coloured groups is something that they actively seek to overcome. These attempts can be can be instigated out of self-interest and pragmatism; an anti-racist ideology; collective action against a single issue or longer-term, more meaningful interaction. Some agents in Cape Town recognize the practical benefits of integration. In forming the crew, Writer’s Block, Big Dre recognized that discrimination against potential members would be to the detriment of his future group. He subsequently was only interested in the ability of potential members:

Big Dre: When we put the crew together, we weren’t even thinking about that, we were like, does Dude MC dope? Is he a dope? DJs here don’t produce it? That’s what we’re looking at, not like oh he’s a white, you know?

Informal conversation

Big Dre’s motivation to form the best possible hip-hop crew in Cape Town eventually created a multiethnic group. Others expressed a belief that integration in Cape Town
needs to be instigated on a larger scale because the separation is adversely affecting the overall hip-hop movement in the city. This division is both racial and generational and in this vein, Arsenic (who is also a member of Big Dre’s crew) expresses a desire to unite the warring factions of Cape Town hip-hop:

Arsenic: We should leave the stupid racial issues, you know, then I think we can actually start something because…we all want the same thing. We all want to, you know, we all want hip-hop in Cape Town to move and, and be bold you know, the only way we can is physically, physically be a bit more united…get rid of all these negatives steamers attached to everything and just you know, go, go, music man yeah….Culturally, too…trying to bridge the gap between the different cultures, man…you know…the old, the new…because the old perceives the new to be on some bullshit, you know.

Interview extract

Other motivations in fostering an overarching Cape Town hip-hop community were ideological and many heads expressed antiracist sentiment. Arguing that coloured people are essentially black, Mercy articulates what he perceives to be the artificiality of racial divisions in South Africa:

Mercy: Like, nobody would mention the fact like the coloured cats…are black, bro! You know, whether you want to look at it like if you’ve been brainwashed to the point you can’t even see that black as being black, like…even black…black means the fucking absence of colour, you know. I’m brown textured, you know!

Interview extract

Abstract fails to recognize that although initially these divisions were artificial, they have been performed into existence and violently stratified the two groups. There are also key differences like language, described in the previous section that cannot be easily reconciled. Jeffers et al (1996) found that it was important that cultural differences are recognized and accommodated in any efforts to integrate different groups. This understanding was displayed by Writer’s Block in them allowing individual members to rap in their preferred language.

The political and authenticity discourses prevalent within hip-hop culture, emphasize consciousness and unity, and this is another motivational factor in Cape

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58 These are described in further detail in chapter 7.
Town hip-hop heads pursuing integration. Although not doing anything to achieve it himself, Slew Dadda argues that true heads should ‘overcome ignorance’ and pursue reconciliation:

Slew Dadda: If hip-hop is anything, it’s a fucking evolution of self-expression, and like a fucking vehicle of togetherness to overcome ignorance. That’s just not happening. Maybe Nas is right…maybe fucking hip-hop is dead59.

**Interview extract**

During fieldwork there were instances where people attempted to get black and coloured hip-hop performers engaged in mutually beneficial collective action around a single issue. This occurred when some older practitioners sought to establish a hip-hop union to represent the interests of local artists. Unfortunately, this proved unsuccessful as mutual distrust prevented this type of cooperation. As Olsen notes: ‘if the members of some group have a common interest or objective, and if they would all be better off if that objective were achieved, it [does not necessarily follow] that the individuals in that group…act to achieve that objective’ (1965, p. 1). The potential benefits of a hip-hop union were displayed after Hype magazine decided to hold a one-day hip-hop festival in Cape Town, featuring both black and coloured artists. Most artists were disappointed that each group was only being offered R250 and while some attempted to bargain with the magazine collectively, these efforts were futile as black and coloured artists did not communicate over the matter. This story has echoes of the ‘prisoner dilemma’, where prospects of cooperation are destroyed by distrust and selfishness. Another informant explained that whenever a booking agent approaches him, he used to ask for R5000 for his crew to perform and admitted this was no longer possible because others could always be found who would perform for nothing, or next to nothing.

Although individuals will not adopt a universal position on every single issue, there will still some elements of working together on matters of mutual concern. For instance, in the advocacy group called ‘Stop the Cape Town anti-graffiti by-law’ drew

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59 Hip-hop is dead is the name of a studio album and single by US artist Nas. For many, Nas’s bold announcement was perceived to be a direct attack on Southern US hip-hop characterized by Crunk (a fusion of hip-hop and electro music). However, it is also seen to attack the way hip-hop’s roots of social activism and black consciousness have been watered down and polluted by commercialism.
support from a wide range of Cape Town artists representing both black and coloured groups.

The City of Cape Town is planning to enact an anti-graffiti bylaw which will make it illegal to have any artwork on a publicly visible wall, without special city approval. This will give the local government powers of censorship over private wall space, and officially classifies all non-approved mural art as vandalism for which the property owner will be held responsible.

Facebook campaign, posted August 19 2009

This campaign is more in line with the conclusion of Jeffers et al (1996) that one important factor in the success of race-relations initiatives is whether the different communities share common interests and are in some way are interdependent. This campaign was successful because the two hip-hop communities in Cape Town could envisage an outside enemy, which impinged on everyone’s hip-hop activity.

There were a handful of longer-term commitments where both black and coloured individuals were seen to work together. One such instance was the formation of a local NGO called Building Blocks, which aimed to educate youth through the elements of hip-hop. Lolo describes how as well as the desire to help young people in Africa, a motivation in forming this organization was the opportunity to involve all groups:

Lolo: Ultimately, what we are trying to do with Building Blocks is to involve each and every crew involved in Cape Town hip-hop...to stop complaining and try and do something. We just need to be organized to the point that we can talk to anyone and everybody for us to be heard. And, it’s not going to happen individually...hence, we need things like Building Blocks as a starter to actually try not to push Archetypes only but to push Cape Town hip-hop.

Interview extract

In the final line Lolo asserts, as others have before, that what is good for Cape Town hip-hop is good for every individual crew under its umbrella. Hip-hop entrepreneurial activities in Cape Town (described more fully in chapter 6) cause a great deal of competition amongst artists and the success of building blocks could be put down to it being a non-commercial endeavour.
5.4.2. External initiatives

According to Berry (1997), for two communities to integrate, one must play the role of a ‘receiving community’ whose members constantly work to remake their boundaries and receive the other instead of the two mutually merging. While this perspective is plausible in many contexts, it neglects the importance of outsiders. This section describes four ways external agents have worked to unite hip-hop practitioners in Cape Town. These are: the organization of integrated concerts and festivals; the emergence of complementary industries; the appearance of a local multi-ethnic record label; and finally the efforts of individual outsiders.

During fieldwork there were a number of free musical events organized by the local council. These were called Goemarati (‘you are welcome’) and involved both black and coloured hip-hop artists. These shows were explicitly designed to bring together the different ethnicities in Cape Town and to reclaim all public spaces as genuinely communal. However, in my experiences artists just showed up for their timeslots and left: in practice they were only together on the advertising material and had little face-to-face contact and because they didn’t feel an ownership of the event and the audience sizes were much bigger, I rarely encountered the kind of intense networking that was so prevalent in other, smaller gigs. The audiences was not representative of the Cape Town demographic either and almost completely reflected the residents and daytime workers of central Cape Town.

During fieldwork I saw how a local ‘urban fashion label’ worked as a complementary organization to both black and coloured hip-hop practitioners. Their website describes their alignment with local artists thus:

Butanwear has taken a stance to move away from the conventional way of sponsoring artists…Instead we have chosen the route of mutual growth, whereby the brand markets itself hand in hand with the artist.

www.butanwear.com

It would not benefit the commercial interests of the company to exclusively work with either black or coloured artists, so it works with both. Through this endeavour it produced a poster series in which it was careful to incorporate a representational sample of performers:
The Butan “Foldout Poster” series is a poster designed by metro4, that is produced quarterly featuring up and coming acts in Mzanzi’s underground Hip-Hop scene. It is distributed in magazines, at retail stores that stock the brand, at radio stations and at Hip-Hop events.

www.butanwear.com

Figure 5.5. Poster no. 2 in the Butanwear foldout series

A few years before fieldwork commenced, a London hip-hop producer called Damien Stephens or ‘DPlanet’ moved to Cape Town and after working with some local MCs established a record company called Pioneer Unit. Damien came from the position of an outsider and had no vested interest in either the black or coloured camp. Subsequently, this label has established a stable of artists from both sides of the divide and instigated collaboration and communal events where there were none before. MC Jaak describes his excitement of working with a black artist that was arranged by Damien:

60 South African
Jaak: Most definitely, that was like a dream come true, working with Konfab, next to Konfab, those are the guys who lay the foundation for the next level, next level, so it was like, to be part of that was something else. Working with the Planet also, with this new sound he’s trying to do, this new techno driven pop sound, that’s something new, it has never been done.

**Interview extract**

The artists who are affiliated with either Butanwear or Pioneer Unit enjoy certain privileges that others do not. For instance, artists gained free publicity in the Butan poster series and artists of Pioneer Unit get free studio time with an experienced producer. These new groups also exclude and work towards hoarding opportunities (Tilly 1999) but the crucial difference is that it does not instigate this on the basis of a person’s race.

On a smaller level, there are occasions where individual agents (like myself) with an interest in hip-hop come to Cape Town and choose to affiliate with all hip-hop heads and not just ones from either side of the racial divide. This group incorporates students, travellers and new immigrants and this brokerage process was something that I played an important role in. Lolo describes the impact I had in making links between black and coloured Cape Town hip-hop heads:

Lolo: Every year, bro…do you know what it takes for us to all meet? It takes some overseas character [me] to come over here and see what’s happening. Even people you hardly ever see show up because this MC, like, hey, from the States or something…only then do we want to actually want to acknowledge like oh, yeah, there is actually hip-hop in Cape Town…and so many different people come out of the crevices, you know, just based on the fact somebody from the States is coming.

**Interview extract**

I present the following photograph of an instance when I managed to socialize with both black and coloured practitioners simultaneously.
5.4.3. Evaluating outcomes

Why do some of the initiatives described here succeed better than others? I identify three factors that determine the outcome: the length and quality of contact, the ability to instigate meritocracy and ability for both groups to establish hip-hop associations outside of Cape Town.

The length and durability of contact increases the success of integration. One-off gigs like those organized by the local city council are short lived – artists are bussed in and bussed out with no meaningful contact with each other. However, the formation and running of organizations, like Building Blocks, makes prolonged contact necessary, more meaningful and therefore become a greater success. It is important not to be too critical of any effort to integrate however, because any form of desegregation is the first step in reducing prejudice (Longshore and Prager 1985). Evidence from community studies has shown that people from different classes who engage with each other in a variety of everyday contexts gain a more rounded appreciation of one
another’s attitudes and lifestyle that can reconcile some divisions and increase understanding.

Structuralist approaches to community (e.g. Bradley 1996) can help us assess why these attempts to foster community in Cape Town have largely been disappointing. These approaches depart from the community studies literature by conceptualizing society as a total structure and this theorization resonates with my experiences in Cape Town that showed black and coloured hip-hop fractions are not formed simply through a host of independent choices but by structural inequality. This inequality is so entrenched that affiliation to the culture of hip-hop, no matter how meaningful, is unlikely to overturn relationships that apply everywhere else in South Africa. Harris (1972) and Jenkins (1983) have both shown that ethnic identities transcend membership of particular geographical communities, and it makes sense therefore that ethnic identities continue to play an important role in socially organizing the Cape Town hip-hop scene.

The social separation of Cape Town heads works to hamper the instigation of internal efforts to integrate. It makes sense therefore that by broadening associations outside of the vested interests of the region with organizations, like a foreign owned record company, can help to foster a meritocracy where skill and artistic credibility become more important than race. In the end however, the desegregation and reconciliation of Cape Town hip-hop is intimately tied to the desegregation and reconciliation of South Africa as a whole. This is inescapable.

5.5. The extension of community

The time-space compression thesis advocated by Harvey (1989) asserts that transport and communication technologies have reduced the significance of place by making people more mobile and the increased capacity to communicate and interact has resulted in the interpenetration of many different social worlds (Harvey 1989, p. 41). In reference to my own fieldwork, I discovered that there were numerous instances of local hip-hop activity and networks becoming extended across the world.

So far, this chapter has focused on the relationships and social practices hip-hop heads
enjoy within the confines of Cape Town, this section however moves beyond the geographical site of this ethnography to analyse the extension of the city’s hip-hop community.

5.5.1. Multiregional

While some researchers have argued that recent decades have seen ‘placelessness’ become a defining feature of modern life (Meyrowitz 1985; Kunstler 1993), it could not have become a feature of South African life before the post apartheid environment removed rigid restrictions on movement. Today, Cape Town has the largest degree of internal migration in the country and two of my hip-hop informants had recently moved to the city from Johannesburg. One of these contacts, MC Sudan, continued to practice hip-hop in Cape Town but positioned himself outside of the local scene by overwhelmingly only working with the contacts he had already made elsewhere. The producer he used, the studio he recorded in and the photographer he employed for CD covers were all residents of Johannesburg. This established network as well as his financial ability to travel to any city when his hip-hop production demanded, allowed him to by-pass the Cape Town hip-hop community altogether, where he even refused to attend local shows.

Sudan: I don’t really go to [local] shows, you know. As I said the whole thing kind of bores me. Unless it’s something new, you know. So I’m not going to leave my house and go to see something I’ve already seen, you know. I won’t do it in Cape Town.

Interview extract

Luckily, I was able to spend time with Sudan through his manager, Black, who I had met networking in local hip-hop venues and who was also from Johannesburg. The experience and attitude of this musician seems to be in line with Flanagan (1993) illustration that peoples’ social networks often connect them more fully with people in other parts of a nation and world than some in their own hometown.

Romeo was not this elusive as Sudan and after moving to Cape Town from Johannesburg, keenly instigated relationships with local heads:
Gary: So how did you start hooking up with hip-hop acts like TOP? I know you’ve got a lot of years of experience in hip-hop.

Romeo: I hooked up with … I used to manage Optical Illusion…then I came to Cape Town, then I wanted to work with Sudan61 first… Then I saw Archetypes and then I was impressed with these guys and I gave them my portfolio, they liked it.

Interview extract

After hearing Sudan’s songs on the radio and reading about him in *HYPE* (the national hip-hop magazine) but not encountering him at local musical events, other heads considered him arrogant for shunning the local scene. He was roundly criticized because he did not share the solidarity, collective identity, instances of cooperation and collaboration that other Cape Town practitioners enjoyed. Conversely, Romeo proved himself a lot more successful in integrating himself to the local hip-hop community and made a concerted effort to take part in many social practices.

Movement from Cape Town to other areas of South Africa, even in the very short term, has created further hip-hop associations throughout the country. Touring, a necessary activity for aspiring musicians, has greatly facilitated these country-wide associations. During fieldwork, my flatmate MC Yanga for instance, had recently moved from Grahamstown but was already familiar with a selection of local crews who he met when they all played the annual festival in his hometown. Due to the lack of money-making opportunities for Cape Town performers (explored more fully in chapter 6), some prominent artists like Gemini from Cashless Society and Lolo from the Archetypes have now been lured away from Cape Town to Johannesburg, but still enjoy and reap the benefits of their extensive hip-hop networks in the city and come back occasionally to take part in shows.

Although being quite diverse, African music and particularly African hip-hop has to a large extent been collectively categorized62, and this caused some frustration among many Cape Town musicians. A London based record label, ‘Afrolution Records’, has dedicated itself to distribute all types of African hip-hop around Europe and in this endeavour has released some Cape Town material on compilation CDs alongside

61 Romeo had originally worked with Sudan in Johannesburg.

62 Returning to the UK after fieldwork, my friends who enjoy hip-hop music unjustifiably expected me to be knowledgeable about hip-hop from all over Africa.
other African rappers. There are also dedicated online African hip-hop portals (for instance, Africasgateway and Africahhiphop.com), which are edited and maintained in Europe and an MTV channel, which has committed itself to broadcast a third of music videos of African in origin. While grouping African music together, these organizations have done little to create meaningful links as they only bring artists’ content together in a superficial way and do not encourage any personal or meaningful contact.

However, many African hip-hop artists do feel a connection with each other. This is partially explained by the influence of Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism in dominant understandings of authenticity (Clay, 2003) and this facet is explored further in chapter 7. The following quotes are lifted from a radio show I co-hosted, and I have selected them here to illustrate how one Cape Town artist didn’t feel a particular affiliation to Cape Town or his home province of KwaZulu Natal, but rather to all the people of Africa:

Nick Knuckles: That’s tight man; you feel you came here with a specific Natalic [sic] influence?

Sudan: Specific?

Nick Knuckles: Like, your influence, do you feel you came from this place as someone from somewhere else. To Cape Town, do you think you’ve come to push out something different?

Sudan: To the people of Cape Town? I mean my agenda has always been an African agenda so wherever I am in South Africa, wherever I am in Africa my agenda remains the same. It didn’t change when I came to Cape Town…That’s what hip-hop is about: it’s a ghetto newspaper and it doesn’t matter where the ghetto is.

Radio interview conducted by Nick Knuckles and broadcast on UCT Radio, March 12th 2007

In this extract we can see that Sudan articulates an affinity to all Africans. Similarly in requesting still images for his music video ‘Once Upon a Time in Africa’, he was keen that they be representative of the whole continent. For instance images of historical figures included Patrice Lumumba; Kwame Nkrumah; Samora Machel; Steve Biko; Sekou Toure; Albert Luthuli; Haile Selassie; Idi Amin; Hamilton Naki
and King Sobhuza II. It struck me however that in Sudan’s case he seemed to be just playing lip service to the idea of African unity and did little to connect to other Africans in hip-hop production. While celebrating African culture and history generally and expressing a shared identity, other features of community affiliation like solidarity, cooperation and collaboration were non-existent.

5.5.2. Global

Many of Cape Town performer’s hip-hop networks, in terms of fans and entrepreneurial opportunities are truly global in reach. Illustrating this point, the acknowledgment section of an album produced in Cape Town during fieldwork, thanked the following people from an assortment nationalities:

Remy & Queen Luana of Switzerland, Raskal from Ireland, Blue Eyes and Jonzi D from England, David Paul from Bomb Records in California, Toro, Tes and Kenneth from Norway, Speedy, Storm, Swift of Battle Squad, Can 2 and Loomit from Germany. Darco from France, Mauritzio from Italy, Trent, Blaze and Mistery from Australia, Dance Machine from Japan and Nino from Brazil.

I found it amazing that instead of trying to connect with other Captonians of a different race, artists actively and energetically pursued these global affiliations. Although expressing a pride in their city and country, many hip-hop heads in Cape Town were truly global in their outlook and affirmed their desire to travel internationally both for professional reasons and for personal development. This global outlook is facilitated by their artistic endeavours that allow them to feel an identification and membership to a larger global group or imagined community (Anderson 1983) of hip-hop heads. It is also instigated through the movement of people globally to and from Cape Town (either through tourism or migration) and also by hip-hop entrepreneurial or ‘hustling’ activities.

63 Patrice Lumumba was the first elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo; Kwame Nkrumah was an influential Pan-Africanist from Ghana; Samora Machel was a Mozambican military commander and the country’s first President; Steve Biko was the founder of Black Consciousness in South Africa and martyred anti-apartheid activist; Sekou Toure was a former President of Guinea; Haile Selassie I was the Emperor of Ethiopia and hailed as the Rastafarian Messiah; Idi Amin was President of Uganda; Hamilton Naki was a black South African who was Dr. Chris Barnard’s surgical assistant for the first heart transplant operation and King Sobhuza II was the King of Swaziland.
Cape Town is a cosmopolitan and international city (illustrated by high levels of tourism and inward migration) and provides an arena where global affiliations can easily arise. In the following extract Slew describes how his European friends have influenced his hip-hop:

Slew Dadda: My boy that jams with me a lot…he is from Columbia and he rhymes in Spanish and French and English. And, I’m learning what he says in Spanish and I’m learning a bit of…hopefully I can, in a few years or so, through the powers…I can include Spanish in my rhymes, into my rhymes...and into my Reggae shit.

Interview extract

These global affiliations that many Cape Town artists enjoy means that some groups, like the Metalliods have members dispersed throughout the world. This international composition is not a one off. Midus from the Dark Lordz told me that there were about six or seven people in his crew that has been going for four years but three or four are ‘travelling around’. Apparently, they are waiting until they have a good body of material behind them before they reunite and release an album.

Due to the limited commercial opportunities in Cape Town (see chapter 6), many artists seek work abroad. For artists who wish to make a successful livelihood from hip-hop, there is a belief that they have to leave South Africa in order to realise their potential. During an interview, an informant revealed his motto for success:

Binary Divide: Go global or go home…fuck the hood.

Informal conversation

Often, non-commercial institutions facilitate global networks of hip-hop heads. Commenting on the tournament described at the beginning of this chapter, Watkins asserts that:

Hip-hop events such as the Battle of the Year create spaces for a globalization from the bottom, bridging people together across the barriers of geography, language and race (2007, p. 65).

Individual NGOs working out of South Africa, or with projects in the country, have also instigated international interaction among hip-hop heads. For instance, a Cape Town based charity called ‘Heal the Hood’, has two of the five aims on their mission
statement that explicitly state the purpose: ‘to create a network of youth internationally’ and ‘to create sustainable exchanges between youth globally’. The mission statement summaries its aims thus:

To create a sustainable network of youth artists nationally and internationally through which jobs and new skills are created, arts products and arts related information can be distributed. 

www.healthehood.org

There have been instances where meaningful interaction has occurred between Cape Town heads and international hip-hop practitioners but these can only happen with prolonged encounters like those that occur through migration to Cape Town or from Cape Town to somewhere else. Most of the interactions described in this section are superficial and only amount to small scale and fleeting interaction among a small group of individuals. Much of my data asserts the centrality of place and social intimacy to individual’s hip-hop related endeavours and that there is only a strong sense of fraternity amongst those who had prolonged contact with each other.

While hip-hop heads can be regarded as belonging to a global ‘imagined communities’ members (Anderson 1983) and people articulate a sense of collective identity with others even if they do not have regular face-to-face contact them, when Cape Town heads enter into global relationships, they always do so by projecting a strong Cape Town identity. While articulating a motivation to work abroad, Uno argues that by doing this he will also be specifically representing his home city:

Uno: We’re on a global mission you know, that’s what we’re all about, we’re on a global mission...we’re trying to take it to that level. We are representing you know, like we have the track you know, it’s called Rap-Present, it’s represent, but you spell it as Rap-Present. I’m sure you know, ‘We rap-present, I’m a guy from Cape Town, that’s for real. We rap-present, I’m a guy from Cape Town,’ so that’s the type of message we trying to get out.

Gary: You want people to respect Cape Town?

Uno: Yeah, we're trying to acquaint them. We want to get bookings, we want to get booked from Cape Town to over there. So, for now, we’re gonna go there ourselves and prove to them and show them that, ‘Yo, this is what we’re all about, we dope like that, so you should book us just like you book US artists. So that’s how we’re trying to takeover.

Interview extract
This idea of ‘rap-presenting’, is used by Uno to describe the way hip-hop offers a way to represent Cape Town. As already mentioned, hip-hop is an example of imagined community (Anderson 1983), where people feel part of a large collective even though they do not have contact with a majority of other members. Some of the social features of globalization have expanded the associations heads enjoy beyond the confines of Cape Town and thus make place less of a constraining factor on their activities of hip-hop heads. Online presence and the democratization of global travel in particular have fuelled these new community formations. Although these new transport and communication technologies manipulate space and certainly decrease the importance of distance, a social attachment to a particular locality is still evident in Cape Town hip-hop. Mobility and access to these technologies is not equal for everyone and some groups in Cape Town can more easily tap into any global hip-hop communities.

5.5.3. Virtual communities

Men living in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common (Dewey 1929, p. 154).

While insisting back in 1929 that communication was the central component to community, Dewey could not have imagined the emergence and spread of ICT technology which allows monumental quantities of information, images and commodities to become available anywhere and at anytime (Albrow 1997, p. 44). The theorizing of virtual communities has become important in the study of communities in recent years (e.g. Castells 2001; Jones 1995; Rheingold 1993; Shields 1996; Smith and Kollok 1999) and this section evaluates the consequences ICT has had on interactions Cape Town heads have with others online, both those which complement pre-existing face-to face interaction and those which are completely virtual. This section ends by assessing the type of relationship the Internet facilities and the extent that we can call these formations communities.

In Cape Town, the Internet has become a ubiquitous facet of communication between local hip-hop heads that has enhanced the effectiveness of their real world relations. It has also meant that practical freedoms are extended as people are less dependent on
mass media, which has largely neglected South African hip-hop, and allows them to consume their music through social networking websites like Myspace and Facebook (although access to these technologies are racially stratified).

Communication is not personalized like an email to a single recipient but information is published for all to see ‘blanket bombing’ instead of firing surgically guided missiles. This is suitable and practical in disseminating information about forthcoming shows and releases. Below is a sample of the numerously weekly posts found on Cape Town musicians web pages:

Whats good People!. The first regular bi-weekly event "BASIC TRAINING" kicks off this. Fri 30th October. SPINNING WAX: Solarize 21:00-22:30; Nastie Ed 22:30- 00:00; Raiko 00:00- 02:00. HOSTS: Jaak; Rattex.R30 will get you in. Also, don't forget, there's just over a week to go until we launch our regular bi-weekly Friday night club session. Hip Hop like it's supposed to be done with DJ Raiko at the controls fresh from his Euro tour with Ben Sharpa!

Internet communication, posted on Facebook

Another post requested urgent help, went as follows:

Ntsikelelo Potwana CRISIS ON A SUNDAY: How do you upload your own track on myspace? I tried... Please help.

Internet communication, posted on Facebook

This method of communication allows individuals to do more in loose affiliation with others, rather than requiring stable, long-term relations to enact effective cooperation. Fluidity and low commitment required of any given cooperative relationship increases the range and diversity of cooperative relations people can enter, and therefore of collaborative projects they can conceive of as open to them. Here Sole asks for cooperation in getting his crew voted as best South African hip-hop crew.

Sole Dunga: Yo peeps, Archetypes have been on the grind ripping mics in Cape Town and representing the city all over the spot so yall show love and vote for Archetypes for best group at the hype awards go to www.hypemagazine.co.za or sms GroupArchetypes to 41931.

Internet communication, posted on Facebook

These forms of communication allow the coordination of a larger group of people
than the telephone allows and expands the pool of potential participants beyond the restrictions of time and place. As well as adding to the range of communication people who already interact have available to them, the Internet also facilitates communication amongst those who do not (and often, never will have) face-to-face contact. Youtube has allowed Cape Town artists to showcase music video, performance and short documentaries about bands. Websites like African hip-hop.com allows artists to bypass established and traditional publishing routes, which have traditionally ignored South African artists. Haupt has illustrated how the use of baobab Connections (www.baobabconnections.org) has facilitated communication between youths globally, for example, in organizing an online global hip-hop poetry competition (2008, p. 35).

This and other sites also are designed for social networking; they make the process of connecting with others who share a similar interest straightforward. Some authors, advocating the liberating consequences of the Internet have argued that it can set people free from geographical and social constraint, enabling them to associate with those who are truly like-minded (Rheingold 1993; Jones 1995; Holmes 1997). These associations can develop from an initial virtual phase to ‘real-world’ face-to-face interaction. In the following interview extract, Uno describes how initial contact online with German booking agents eventually took him to Germany.

Uno: No, well, it’s not that it’s [Germany] my favourite country, you know, to go to and like there are many other countries that I like, even the US, the real Japan and all of those you know, but we came across these. Since we’ve been living in this area, we came across these websites, like Myspace.com and we sort of networked over there, met a few people and they happened to be in Germany. I got a huge response from Germany…More than any other country, you know.

Interview extract

Entertainment and commercial possibilities were not fully explored in the work of earlier theorists (e.g. Castells 2001; Reingold 1993). There is therefore a lack of theorizing globalization within these sets of motivations. The following statement was posted by a Cape Town based DJ who was organizing a show. In this instance, he seeks to bring some of his online contacts to the city:

Yo, calling all dj's out there. We're planning a Hip Hop Film Festival later
this year & if you're interested i want to invite 1 international dj to come
spin at the After Party with some of Cape Town's finest djs.

Internet communication, posted on Facebook

This democratization has empowered local artists by allowing them to have a similar
web presence to artists operating elsewhere. By looking at web presence alone it is
often difficult to know which artist is the most successful. One MC affirmed, ‘There’s
no egos on Myspace, even me and Doom are now buddies’. Although they might be
friends online, these relationships are less meaningful than a ‘real world one’ and
interaction is more superficial in cyberspace. In ‘virtual’ interaction the only thing
that is usually exchange is language like songs, pictures and lyrics, Miller (1996, p.
294) asserts people in these places are just ‘passing through the dark’. The following
MC wondered what benefits these followers would actually bring him in a
commercial sense:

Ben Sharpa: What do these girls want from me? I’ll talk to them about
anything they want…if they buy my shit

Informal conversation

It should be emphasized here that the means to communicate are not distributed
evenly in South Africa. Whilst nearly all have ears to listen and mouths to speak;
computers, Internet connectivity and the know how to utilize these technologies are
less than ubiquitous. In South Africa, there is a clear, visible and wide digital divide
and coloured hip-hop heads are much more likely to have access to personal
computers. Due to these factors it was uncommon for black artists to have their own
computers, so the benefit of 24/7 connectivity eluded them because they could only
go on the Internet intermittently. The Internet and mobile phones have wrongly
created the false expectation that someone is always reachable. The low connection
speeds mean that a global digital divide can also be witnessed, affecting the whole of
the African continent\textsuperscript{64}. This means South African heads are at a disadvantage
compared to their European and American counterparts.

\textsuperscript{64} A visiting professor from South Africa drew surprise and delight when he found live streaming was
available through Newcastle University’s Internet connection.
5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the rhetoric and experiences of hip-hop heads towards solidarity (and its absence), boundaries to solidarity and a world of hip-hop beyond Cape Town. I have shown how within the city, hip-hop is fundamentally divided and this division is most apparent in the split between black and coloured practitioners. Although all practitioners have on one level, a collective identity, solidarity and cooperative relations, these are mainly enacted within artists’ own racial classifications and not between them. Some of the persistent inequality in Cape Town is the outcome of ‘opportunity hoarding’ (Tilly 1999), difference and discrimination. However, there have been some efforts, both intentional and unintentional, which have worked to overcome this ethnic division. These efforts have come from both within the hip-hop community and from outside and the results have been varied. Evidence from fieldwork suggests that crucial factors in fostering integration are prolonged and meaningful contact; including outsider agents (both at the individual and organizational level) in hip-hop production and ability to instigate a culture of meritocracy. Organizations like Pioneer Unit and Butanwear and outside agents are working to make place less of a point of division as they recruit and associate with both black and coloured practitioners. As a consequence of hip-hop being a globally popular culture and advances in technologies of communication and transport, Cape Town based associations have extended beyond the geographical confines of the city.
Chapter 6. The Hip-Hop Hustle: A Lifestyle and a Livelihood

6.1. ‘3rd World hustles’

RING-RING! [Alarm clock sounds]

Wake up in the morning - can I do it again?

Hustle!

In the morning, can I do it again?

Hustle!

Wake up in the morning - can I do it again?

Hustle!

These are the lyrics to the song ‘wake up’ I was listening to in my Cape Town apartment with Lolo, MC and main driving force behind the local hip-hop crew who recorded the song. The track was co-written by all three members of the band and featured on their debut EP – ‘3rd World hustles’. The material on the record is principally autobiographical and Lolo felt the title neatly encapsulated the group’s plight and focus as they attempt to make a success of their hip-hop career with little or no finance. An affiliate described the trio’s plight:

Romeo: when it comes to Archetypes, like it’s guys from the ghetto who are not working…like there are no funds, everything is done from like our own pockets, so it’s kind of difficult.

Interview extract

The members of the group live with their parents in Langa and Gugulethu Townships and Lolo had travelled to the centre of town to promote a gig he was organizing later in the week. This was a flying visit, because he had to get flyers designed and printed, inform friends, family and fans about the show and try to convince the venue owner to allow him to pay for the hiring of the performance space after the gig when he had collected peoples’ entrance fees. He also had to eat and find a way to get home with no money in his pocket. Although in the above quote, Romeo says that the group were
not working, he was strictly referring to formal paid employment. In truth, the trio were working hard each day, including weekends, to maintain their commitment to hip-hop production:

Lolo: The weekends we spend…like Saturdays we spend in the ghetto, get everything hooked up…turntables, mics, marimbas, you know, everything is there, you know. Trying to grind, try to do what we do, try to rhyme, you know.

**Interview extract**

Lolo and his band mates regard their profession to be hip-hop, and their various non-musical activities that go along with that like securing equipment, organizing shows and even navigating the city as *hustles*. While ‘community’ is not a term in local idiom, ‘hustle’ very much is and other local hip-hop heads who listened to the song would instantly understand the reference. The hypnotic chorus of ‘wake up’ we were listening to is their own interpretation and representation of these daily experiences of struggling to survive and hopefully thrive as artists in Cape Town. The repetitive lines symbolize the continuous grind that many other people in the Cape Town’s hip-hop scene execute: where each day brings little but the expectation that it all has to be repeated tomorrow. There is immense insecurity in pursuing this lifestyle as a livelihood and accordingly the MCs rhetorically ask themselves ‘in the morning *can* I do it again?’

This chapter investigates the motivations of artists to pursue this seemingly precarious and insecure career path. Specifically it is about the various non-artistic work or ‘hustles’ that are executed as a prerequisite to hip-hop production; in this regard, hip-hop heads are no different from other artists in their precarious livelihoods, often depending on intimate networking to secure favourable connections that can provide them work. I also examine the constraining and liberating forces that they, while working on the outskirts of the entertainment industry, encounter in this pursuit. An exploration is also provided on how artists, through the act of hustling, utilize different forms of capital within the informal economy and how social norms connect them and facilitate these ventures. The chapter also provides a focus on how the act of hustling is valued and the expected returns individuals have of long-term hustling.
The chapter begins by establishing the definition and meaning that local hip-hop heads attach to the hustle and then discusses the association it has to criminal activity. I then provide an account of how hip-hop heads secure key resources required as a prerequisite to their hip-hop activity, focusing on transport, the means to communicate, food and drink. I continue by giving a depiction of the social world of the hip-hop hustler by highlighting how the act of hustling is valued locally and assessing the social and material resources that hustlers can draw upon and how this is influenced by ethnicity. The fourth section focuses on how individuals hustle in their pursuit of specific facets of hip-hop entrepreneurship which are music-making, performance, distribution, publicity and promotion. Finally, the chapter concludes by illustrating the various long-term outcomes available to those who have chosen to hustle for hip-hop in Cape Town.

6.2. Establishing the hustle

6.2.1. Characterising the hustle

The sense that it was crucial to hustle in order to initiate or continue a career in hip-hop is one of the dominant themes that emerged over and over again throughout fieldwork. The following quote, representative of Cape Town heads’ understanding of the hustle illustrates how the act can be regarded as a way of life, in it’s all-encompassing and time-consuming attributes, but also as a livelihood, in representing a way to secure resources and achieve goals related to a hip-hop career:

Uno: The hustle is waking up in the morning and doing something; waking up in the morning and do something, like you have goals in life, you have missions, you have objectives, so if you’re always at it, you know, that’s the hustle.

Interview extract

My use of the concept mirrors the popular usage inside the Cape Town hip-hop community where conducting daily and varied enterprising strategies, while being handicapped by a limited and finite amount of material resources, are grouped together and constitute ‘the hustle’. This understanding of the hustle can be rephrased
as a type of entrepreneurship that utilizes social and cultural capital within the informal economy in pursuit of hip-hop artistic production.

The concept of the hustler originates in early depictions of black urban America and became a ubiquitous character in the African-American literary canon, illustrated in the work of Goines (1972a and 1972b), Haley and Malcolm X (1964) and Slim (1969). The most prominent depiction of the hustling persona in sociological literature comes from Polsky’s (1967) famous study of American pool halls\(^{65}\) and the hustlers in these accounts are characterized by the practice of deception in order to make ‘immediate pecuniary gain’ (Wacquant 1999, p. 142). The concept and characteristics of ‘the hustler’ has drifted slightly from this original usage in hip-hop vernacular, and is widely used\(^{66}\) and understood to describe someone operating within the informal economy to get by in life and hip-hop by any way they can.

The hustles I witnessed share the features of these other sociological and literary depictions in that they are distinguished in their display of initiative and resourcefulness. However, they depart in the desired outcome: money was not perceived as an end in itself but rather, hustling was pursued in order to instigate, maintain or progress artistic activity in hip-hop. In the following quote, Uno explains how hustling can encompass a multitude of ways in order to fulfil his participation and engagement with hip-hop:

Uno: I still dream of going to Europe…I’ll hustle to get there. When I get there I’ll hustle too. I’ll hustle to get on Hype [magazine], hustle to record tracks, I hustle to get on the mic [to perform] even; I hustle to get on radio, I hustle to get on TV, you know, all of that.

\textit{Interview extract}

My informants generally regarded hustling as labour and framed it as a difficult and challenging activity:

Macho: Working hard, that’s the hustle, to get there, like, yo.

\textit{Interview extract}

\(^{65}\) The prominence of the characterization of the pool hustler has become ubiquitous, largely aided by the hugely popular and Oscar winning, 1961 movie ‘The Hustler’, starring Paul Newman.

\(^{66}\) There are numerous references throughout the culture, for instance, the Huslin’ single by MC Rick Ross (from his debut album ‘Port of Miami’) and the remix which features Jay-Z and Young Jeezy and also the 2005 Oscar winning film ‘Hustle and Flow’ about a petty criminal and aspiring rapper.
Following on from the connotations of work and labour Macho articulates, the hip-hop hustle can be identified as encompassing all the non-artistic work, heads must complete as a prerequisite to artistic production. This understanding corresponds to other studies in creative fields that emphasis that non-artistic work is a prominent feature of artists’ lives (Baines and Wheelock 2003; Bain 2005). This can incorporate a variety of tasks like publicity and promotion linked indirectly to artistic work and also the adoption of secondary occupations that have nothing to do with music. This type of work is often necessary but undesirable as it eats into the creative time and energy of the artist.

6.2.2. Hustling as criminal behaviour

Both hustling and hip-hop have an unfortunate association to criminal and deviant behaviour. Obligatory transgressions through hip-hop recreation (which were in part discussed in the methodology chapter) include illegal graffiti spray painting, illicit file sharing and the use of pirated software, and these were a taken for granted activity for most participants:

Jaak: I try to buy my own stuff mostly nowadays, but if you give me MP3 of some dope shit I’m down.

Interview extract

On occasion, some of these deviant affiliations filter into Cape Town hip-hop cultural products, manifesting themselves in a number of ways. Some of these I witnessed during fieldwork included the sound of police sirens on a number of tracks, numerous references to drug use in songs, one local artist using Cilo as an alias and another MC being pictured on his debut mixtape wearing a balaclava.

DPlanet: That’s what I mean about the hustle, not just about selling a couple of dodgy cell phones and making R50.

Interview extract

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67 Cilo is a game of chance where participants gamble on the outcome of dice.
By suggesting the hustle is ‘not just about selling a couple of dodgy cell phones’, DPlanet advances the proposition that, in part at least, the hustle involves criminal activity. My participation in the hip-hop scene revealed that theft like DPlanet describes did happen but I found it an occasional and sporadic occurrence: a battered old car was bought from an acquaintance but never paid for and mobile phones had a habit of getting themselves ‘lost’. A small number of my informants adopted the role of ‘weed dude’\textsuperscript{68} on an occasional and short-term basis and a limited number of heads had spent time in prison. While references to these transgressions were found in their lyrics, they were not celebrated but rather presented as a cautionary tale and as part of a documentation of their lives. The small-scale criminal activities I encountered are consistent with findings by Fagan (1996), Hagedorn (1998) and Vanketash (1997), who suggest that illicit economic activity is the most readily available and realistic means of economic survival in communities where unemployment is high.

The suggestion of criminality hung over many of my informants. One MC known to his neighbours to be a hip-hop performer decided to stop wearing a T-shirt with the logo ‘Crack Dealer’ on it. Although intended to be ironic, people in his neighbourhood began approaching him for the illicit substance. In my experiences, these criminal stereotypes were largely unfounded and Cape Town heads were nowhere near as deviant as they were perceived to be by my white and middleclass South African friends who would express shock and concern whenever they learnt about my intimate affiliation with them. Mangani expressed a similar experience when his friends from University found out he was spending a lot of recreational time with other rappers residing in Gugulethu Township:

Mangani: People tend to have negative views about the ghetto and rappers...like Gugulethu, like when I came here, peps [people] were telling me you can’t go to Gugulethu. There you’d get stabbed, you know you’d get jabbed, you know you’d get killed, etc, etc. But when I actually made some friends [through hip-hop], and I actually went there, I found out that the place is beautiful.

\textit{Interview extract}

Overall, heads did not feel that hip-hop’s association to criminality resonated with the route it had taken in Cape Town, which emphasised Black consciousness and social

\textsuperscript{68} A small time drug dealer who only sells marijuana.
activism (this aspect is explored further in chapter 7). Indeed, in the following interview extracts, Marcus and Jaak go as far to say that hip-hop diverted and prevented them from entering into the life of crime they were heading for:

Jaak: It saved my life, hip-hop really saved my life, because where I come from, it’s only gangsterism, drugs and alcohol and I was steadily heading that way, steadily, but yes, hip-hop saved my life.

Interview extract

Marcus [alias]: I was in Obz [Observatory], didn’t have any money, broke mother-fucker, came down the steps to the subway and I had this lady walking in front of me, opening her wallet… I could have just mugged her and taken the wallet because I was in need of some money but at that particular time, I was listening to this one track by Killer Priest… ‘Expand your mind…[sings and hums]’…do you know that record?…Yea, I could have mugged her. I’ve done some stuff before and…but, like I said, I was listening to this track…It’s the opposite of what I’m listening to and what I’m trying to do. Therefore, I would say it’s [hip-hop] steering me in a better direction, the right direction… I think it’s [hip-hop] guiding me to become a better person…and having respect for others.

Interview extract

6.2.3. Securing the bare necessities: everyday urban hustles

DPlanet: Just a lack of being able to get hold of people. Just basic stuff like they don’t have anything. There’s no transport so if I want to record, I’ve got to go and pick them people up in Gugz [Gugulethu] and drop them off after. No one’s got money on their phone, they always lose them. Just the general level of disorganization that makes it just hard to do anything. And on top of that general musician behaviour, like people being forgetful, drunk, hung-over, the usual things. But, on top of that having no money!

Interview extract

This response by hip-hop record label owner DPlanet was provoked when I asked him to pinpoint the greatest challenge of working with South African artists instead of Europeans, which he also had experience of. He clearly and forthrightly determined it to be their acute shortage of material resources. This quote highlights some of the necessities needed to function as an independent artist, like transport and a telephone, are not taken for granted by local performers. Consequently, artists have to hustle in order to secure these relatively mundane but nevertheless indispensable items before any hip-hop production is possible. While coloured hip-hop heads were relatively
better off than their black peers, both groups to some extent had to hustle to secure these resources. The necessity of hustling for basic needs like transport and food was a consequence of many of my informants not being in full time paid employment (28 were employed, 34 were unemployed and 5 were in education\textsuperscript{69}). While some gainfully sought employment, the high unemployment rate in South Africa (especially among the black population) made it difficult to secure a job. Other members of my sample were discouraged to look for work because of the low pay that characterizes unskilled professions in South Africa and the belief that formal employment would distract them from artistic practice.

Due to the geographical isolations of the Townships and the limited entrepreneurial opportunities therein, transport is an essential commodity for many hip-hop performers. Macho describes the difficulties he encountered in travelling across the city in continuing his involvement and participation in the Cape Town hip-hop scene. The talented wordsmith was left with two unappealing options: he could either walk the great distance alone or risk taking the train without the money for fare:

Macho: There were places like Observatory where I would travel in a train like, on a Saturday, like a Saturday, would be like one of those days like…I don’t care if I don’t have like a train ticket… All I have in the bag is like my spray can and my notebook…I’m going to a hip-hop gig. The only money I have is to get in the door, and sometimes you even go to gigs, you don’t have anything…securities come and chucked us out of the station, ended up walking home.

\textbf{Interview extract}

Mutually beneficial exchanges were often instigated as a strategy to negotiate the challenge of physical mobility. On occasion cars or vans could be borrowed or rented cheaply from acquaintances and driven to destinations with overflowing passengers, all contributing a few Rand towards the cost of petrol. There was also an instance where Ben Sharpa, unable to travel the distance to a music festival because of financial hardship, was able to convince strangers he was drinking with in a bar to transport him in exchange for free entry into the event.

While all too frequently the acquisition of food was required to satisfy subsistence needs among performers, more often its consumption, along with alcoholic beverages,

\textsuperscript{69}This information is also relayed in the appendices.
were utilized as an effective social lubricant in almost all professional activities. There was great generosity and if someone wasn’t eating, they were instructed, as I was on one occasion, to ‘come and get some, no one’s going to bring it to you’. If we went to a bar that sold quarts we would share a bottle and pour out glasses for all and when they were not available, a individual bottle would be bought for everyone present. For those with more money (like myself), there was often an expectation to buy a round of beers and help provide for others. This expectation was made explicit to me one evening when I was drinking in a bar with DPlanet (owner of Pioneer Unit) and an MC who he had a professional relationship with approached us:

MC: How about a beer?
DPlanet: I’m alright thanks.
MC: No how about buying me a beer?
DPlanet: I thought that sounded strange. Usual way round then. 

Informal conversation

After this exchange, DPlanet dutifully went to the bar and bought us all a beer. The following exchange happened on a further occasion, when I was with Lolo and a rookie MC approached us:

Young Lee: I’m a big fan. I’m an MC also.

Lolo: Really? Well buy us a beer and tell us all about it.

Informal conversation

Here Lolo strategically utilized his symbolic capital of prestige and recognition to get someone to buy him a beer and quite often heads would use both charm and ingenuity to acquire alcoholic beverages as well as other sought after commodities. Impositions were sometimes placed on friends and acquaintances, and this included anything from providing a bed to sleep on or more routinely, a small ‘loan’. Budgeting was extremely rare among the artists I encountered and if someone was perceived to have more money than others, there was an expectation that they would

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70 The larger and cheaper variety of bottled beer.
bear the majority of financial burden. Among some, this expectation occasionally caused a degree of resentment:

Slew Dadda: All the local artists and their mates, they don’t work for a local company or they don’t sell illegal substances…they’re fucking broke and they’re always asking me for shit. That’s how they piss me off.  

**Interview extract**

To keep expenses as low as possible, people sneaked food and drink (typically a used lemonade or orange juice bottle diluted with an alcoholic spirit) into establishments. Once, MC Binary, MC Sudan and I were caught eating chicken in a vegetarian café and were thrown out promptly by the diligent manager causing Binary to dryly observe: ‘you don’t have to own a gun to be a gangster!’ If more than one had money, funds would be pooled together and going for a drink in town became a drunken exercise in logistics, with the most cost-effective and efficient route of bars being hotly and continuously debated. The following extract is the response gleaned from one MC after I merely inquired what he thought we should do one night:

Mingus: If we go to Cadiz on Loop Street at 5, it’s happy hour plus it’s the only place in town to buy quarts, we can then move onto Julep at six for their happy hour and then go to Zula before half seven so we won’t have to pay cover charges to get in.  

**Informal conversation**

For those who had them, the mobile phone represented an indispensible resource. MC Hyphen lost out on being offered lucrative voiceover work on a radio advertisement because he temporarily was without one, a colleague (Son of Virtue) also could not get hold of him to record the second half of a music video so subsequently had to erase his voice and image completely from the final edit. Telephones were also used in coordinating recording sessions, organizing media interviews and informing people about upcoming shows. This is one example of dozens of text messages I received throughout fieldwork:

Hey man how have you been? Sorry I’ve been so quiet lately. We playin tonight at the armchair theatre in observatory prob 9pm.its free so bring friends. How r u?  

**Personal communication**
For those who did have a phone, the handsets were usually second-hand and batteries were often faulty or barely charged, causing people to swap them around intermittently in order to discover missed calls and read text messages that had already been sent. While socialising, performers would regularly ask to borrow other people’s phones and send a text like this one in order to receive a telephone call from someone they wanted to speak to:

Hi Gary. It’s Midus. Ring me back on this number.  

**Personal communication**

Inventiveness was essential under these conditions. Sometimes messages would have to be passed on second hand and during fieldwork people would approach me and say something like: ‘Hey Gary. Yanga has something very important to talk to you about’ and it would be up to me to follow the lead, track down Yanga physically or try to call people he might be with. If someone had an office job, they regularly gave people their work number with the caveat that a call would have to be made and completed by 5pm. These difficulties associated with communication highlight how important a simple thing like a telephone can be for a person to realise their social capital. Initially, I found it contradictory that while most of my informants were so adept at hustling, they couldn’t secure a phone and often ran out of money for pay-as-you-go credit. Later on in fieldwork I discovered that some musicians felt reluctant to buy a phone because they were often stolen and those with them were disinclined to buy credit because their friends would regularly appropriate their phones to make calls. Others felt that they would rather spend the little money they had on other things, like beer.

6.3. The social world of a hustler

6.3.1. Individual characteristics and valuation process

This section analyses the individual characteristics required for a hustler to be successful and the ways a hustling disposition is valued. The ability to establish contacts with others both inside and outside hip-hop is a prized asset for the hustler. There are many reasons for this such as the opportunity it provides in finding
information about forthcoming concerts, getting help to stage a show and find people who can provide sought-after resources like a home studio. DPlanet reveals some of the networking some individuals were required to do in pursuing a career in hip-hop:

DPlanet: People don’t have access to great photographers for cheap. But again, it’s all a hustle. You’ve got to be able to go out there and do a deal with somebody or, I don’t know, give them weed or whatever. Just whatever you can do, to get a photographer to take a couple of nice pictures for you... It’s about being able to hustle up contacts and connections and networks.

Interview extract

Dplanet emphasises the importance of making ‘contacts and connections’ that can provide specialist labour (e.g. professional photography) on a reduced fee. Although people would try to take advantage of many social situations, most networking would occur at hip-hop events. These were essentially sociable occasions and if someone was unknown to another they would often be introduced or take the opportunity to introduce themselves. In this initial dialogue, a musician would attempt to determine a person’s utility in aiding their creative endeavours by asking them a series of questions about their profession, their connection to hip-hop and the types of people they knew at the event. This ‘fishing’ strategy to retrieve information about new contacts was something I witnessed firsthand as it was performed uncountable times on me. In order to pursue hustling successfully, a personal disposition towards networking is therefore both a desired and necessary quality:

SOV: Well, I’ve been networking, you know, but in a subtle way I network into other cats, you know. I network...I just bond with people on a friendship level, you know, and they respect me for that but they can also see ok, he’s a musician as well. But that’s the way I bond with them. I’m not going to actually go wherever they go and do whatever they do. Nah. I’m still who I am but I still connect with people.

Interview extract

Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptualization of social capital indicates that it exists and operates within an individual’s interpersonal relationships and the degree and ability of my sample to pursue their hip-hop interests indicates the endowment of it. Gemini explains in the absence of financial capital, how through horse-trading, contacts can take on a great significance:
Gemini: No one’s got money…I don’t have the kind of money to pay for music videos and that’s [getting music videos made] all through giving people bits and pieces or doing something in return. Or promising something or just getting them excited about being part of something that’s happening.

Informal conversation

Some artists were not innately outgoing and personable and this had an adverse affect on their hustling. Macho describes how through pursuing hip-hop, he gained a more extrovert disposition, enabling him to be more confident and successful in making contacts:

Macho: It [hip-hop] taught me how to, how to be hard, like to be in terms of being street, like not to take shit from anybody, like you know that shit. ‘Cos where we’re from, we get robbed. If they feel like OK, you look interesting; you’re going to get robbed. I don’t carry a gun, but niggers don’t just come and approach …[It’s the] attitude of confidence. Helps me connect. I got all of that from hip-hop and the people around hip-hop.

Interview extract

The broad condition of hardship in Cape Town permits people to emphasis the necessary aspect of hustling (Sköld and Rehn 2007, p. 60) and allows them to frame their hustling endeavours in terms of need instead of greed. Many artists articulated the belief that performers in the city were under unique conditions of adversity:

Hatchet: I didn’t see any place they say they are doing it the way we are doing it…cats is hungry out here.

Interview extract

Framing hustling as a necessary activity means that it becomes both a valued personality trait and a valued activity. In reference to urban America, Valentine (1978) emphasizes the legitimating aspect of hustling by demonstrating that for many it is a required and at times complementary occupation that people are compelled to engage in as a coping strategy for daily struggles. Wacquant offers a similarly sympathetic depiction, arguing that hustling is tolerated because others in similar circumstances understand it to be a necessary activity (1999, p. 143). My informants regarded hustling in a similar vein, often citing hustling as a means to help their own and their family’s condition:
Uno: I’m the bread winner, I’m supporting my moms, I’m supporting my grandmother and my siblings you know, which yeah, I happen to be the bread winner and we’re not privileged in a way, so I have to hustle you know? That’s why I’m still here, I’m still determined to move forward and try and get into music…So that’s where, basically this whole hustling comes from.

Interview extract

Lolo: I want to be bigger than life, man! No fucking lie bro, I want to be bigger than life. I want to be able to give my moms…without her like asking, give my moms a grand without thinking twice about it. Say ‘here you go, what you need to do, do whatever necessary you need to do’.

Interview extract

These two interview extracts illustrate that hustling was often framed as a way of helping the family and worked as a form of legitimation. While hustling is valued as a pursuit to improve economic condition, it is also uniquely valued within hip-hop culture. Goddess (2006) discusses the image and cliché of the ‘struggling artist’ in this musical culture and describes how representations of ‘paying dues’ and hardship have become naturalized in hip-hop. It is familiar for well-known artists to establish their biography on these terms and living through experiences of adversity gives an artist status and credibility and a way to be judged authentic (this is explored further in chapter 7). Consequently, local performers were congratulated if they were seen as making ‘major moves’ by hustling and throughout the research these exertions emerged as a significant personal virtue:

Julian: Thank God there are other people doing it. I mean, I think Tommy is doing really well…he’s bringing artists down from Johannesburg…like he is really pushing it. It’s great to see that there are people that are doing these things. And, that is what we need…more people like that putting gigs together.

Interview extract

If informants had not seen me in a while, they were always keen to impress upon me the extent and variety of hip-hop work they had been engaged in since our last meeting. In a similar way, Cottrell (2004) and Jenkins (2004) showed musicians’ work diaries often act as symbols of their identities as true musicians. Among informants, commercial endorsements, usually from clothing firms, were often used...
to signify their success at hustling and dispatched as evidence that they too were making ‘major moves’.

Macho: Know you are a business you know? So you need to find a lot of ways to grow your business. ProKid\textsuperscript{71} got an endorsement and that is an accomplishment. I would love to have that type of an endorsement you know?...Now at the moment, I endorse Butan, and you know people look at Butane and then they start liking Butan after I’ve warmed them to him…I’m proud of this, man that’s a major move.

\textit{Interview extract}

The idea of ‘making moves’ that Macho evokes was constantly articulated by my research informants and used to describe a positive accomplishment in their artistic career. This imagery of ‘making moves’ was also consistent with artists saying they were in the ‘hip-hop game’, when quizzed by outsiders about their profession.

This motivation to hustle in order to progress an artistic career transforms heads’ exertions into something heroic as artists relate it to tenacity and in all the ways it takes to secure an income or advance a musical career. It inevitably follows that individuals like to think of themselves as a hustler and wear the label as a badge of honour. At its core is a claim regarding possibility and the creation of actuality (Rose 1994) and the making of something out of nothing. The personal struggle is transformed into an ethical political struggle, a version of the ‘American dream’ (Sköld and Rehn 2007) or the biblical battle between David and Goliath, where the activity is romanticized and presented as a noble pursuit. This parallel is apt as during fieldwork I encountered a two-man crew called DSG or David Slew Goliath. The name derived from joining the two MC names together (one is called King David, the other Slew Dadda). In a personal conversation with King David, he said the name struck because it resembles what they were trying to do everyday – ‘slay giants’.

A further reason hustling is so highly valued is because of it being a time-consuming activity and artists want to have faith that their arduous labours are worthwhile. Outcomes therefore become individualized and if people were not progressing, the fault was seen to lie squarely with them and there was little sympathy for those who

\textsuperscript{71} Prokid is a commercially successful artist from Soweto.
complained about not succeeding if they had not put in the hard work. Often, if artists were not doing well, others blamed them for not having hustled enough.

Uno: Artists should really…work hard, you know, they should work hard; they should move it up like Optical Illusion you know, should move it up, like we’re still stuck where we were 5 years ago; you hardly see these cats making moves. And then when they don’t get opportunities and chances, they blame other people, you know….they’re not hustling enough. They do hustle, but not enough.

**Interview extract**

Hustling and specifically the networking aspect of it was unremitting and therefore emotionally tiring. Many artists articulated their frustration that they always needed to be ‘on’ and working, even when it looked like they were socializing for its own sake. While I would always look forward to attending hip-hop shows, some artists treated it as a chore and something they had to do. On a couple of occasions I would bump into a contact I hadn’t seen in a while and ask them what they had been up to and they would say that they needed a break and had not been going out, speaking about their absence almost as if it were a holiday. This continual involvement, even when it was such an exhausting experience, highlighted to me how much producing hip-hop meant to these musicians.

### 6.3.2. Social and material resources

This section analyses the ways the social and material resources available to a head affects their hustling endeavours. Chapter 5 described the racially fragmented nature of Cape Town’s hip-hop community where membership of either black or coloured racial category largely determines the resources a musician can draw upon. Due to the economic stratification of racial groups, coloured performers are more likely to have more money and not have to exert as much effort in securing the bare necessities (travel, food, etc) as their black peers. Coloured practitioners were also far more likely to attain higher educational attainment and a professional career (the empirical evidence of this was detailed in chapter 3) that could subsidize their artistic production. As a consequence of these factors, black performers had greater obstacles to overcome in their entrepreneurial activities.
The geographical and social separation of racial groups in Cape Town means that black and coloured musical events are often organized separately. It is on these occasions where a lot of networking and relationship building occurs and so attendance to either black or coloured events can determine what kind of musical contacts an individual can make. During fieldwork, German and Swiss MCs came to the city to perform a series of charity concerts organised by Emile, a prominent and senior coloured head. Lee Urses, a skilled but inexperienced coloured MC benefited from these networks and was offered introductions to the foreign artists who he later collaborated with. My black contacts were not offered the same opportunity. This experience mirrors Portes (1998) argument that strongly bonded communities can be closed-minded and hostile to outsiders and is also similar to Zhou’s (1992) study that showed that if businessmen of an ethnicity want to hire people outside of their group, they often are dissuaded by members of their community. Loyalty and cooperation are innately low between different racial groups in Cape Town and mutual distrust, fostered over generations, increases the tendency to limit the range of social exchanges. In this research environment, trust took on a heightened significance because there were no effective legal sanctions in most hustling affairs. Like the frafra in Hart’s ethnography, the economy Cape Town hustlers engage with is on the margins of the industrial world and there is no hierarchy among their associates and it is under these conditions that: ‘trust plays so prominent a role, relatively unmediated by the formal obligations of kinship’ (1988, p. 178).

In the following dialogue, Jaak reveals another important attribute of his racial community that gives him a hustling advantage over his black peers. The gifted MC asserts that in the coloured areas of Cape Town hip-hop is the most popular genre which means that a fan base is easy to establish:

Jaak: The cell phones has become the new duke box, I mean the new ghetto blaster from where I’m from, everybody, you see the teenagers is pumping Isaac Mutant. I’m even distributing my stuff in Paarl on cell phones so hip-hop is the sound for coloureds, for my people at the moment.

Interview extract

As well as helping him locate consumers of his music, Jaak also illustrates that membership of the coloured community allows his hustling to be supported by
economic resources, thus illustrating how social capital becomes more effective in richer communities:

Jaak: Out in Paarl, I don’t think it’s that hard to make a buck, there’s a lot of carnivals happening, school carnivals and church carnivals and they’re open for guys to come, so we can make a thousand two hundred for half an hour, or 20 minutes, so that’s … it’s not easy money, but it’s money, it’s a way to buy the next piece of equipment, or some CDs, whatever, because you need to use the money you make from hip hop to feed hip hop again, so you re-invest into the equipment, re-invest into CDs, whatever.

Interview extract

The relative ease with which Jaak can make money in his neighbourhood has allowed him to further his hip-hop career by giving him the resources to purchase important equipment.

Most individuals who participate in the hip-hop scene in Cape Town come from areas with scarce resources and high unemployment. Consequently, in the absence of economic capital, social and cultural forms of capital have to take on a heightened function in facilitating action. This has caused Ariefdien and Abrahams (2006), drawing parallels with the development of hip-hop in the Bronx, to evoke the concept of alchemy – the process of making something out of nothing – to describe individual involvement with hip-hop in South Africa. This metaphor is apt in describing hip-hop, which can be performed in the absence of musical equipment and where people can develop their skill without financial outlay. The following quote reveals that although Macho didn’t have extensive formal education, his exposure to hip-hop taught him the skills necessary to promote other artists:

Macho: I thought you needed like certain qualifications and sometimes you can’t always learn everything through school, you know. You know, you just have to pick it up as you go along, you know…which is what I’ll say about most people working in production, for instance. A lot of people wouldn’t have qualifications but…if you work in a certain spot for so long, you have no choice but to learn all of the knowledge! You gain as much knowledge as you can so you can do your job, you know.

Interview extract

In recent years the black population has become further stratified with the emergence of a middleclass (this group is referred to as the ‘black diamonds’) and this has
become a further point of division among hip-hop practitioners. During fieldwork, there were numerous instances of intra-ethnic discrimination among the black population. One memorable example was when Romeo, who was managing the Archetypes at the time, was asked by the crew to approach the (black) manager of a bar about the possibility of a monthly show. While the crew was keen for Romeo to approach the manager straightaway, he refused and postponed it until he had the opportunity to put a proposal together and wear some ‘decent’ clothes for the meeting. The young musical entrepreneur successfully argued that: ‘if you just go and look like a nigga [sic] off the street, they treat you like a cunt [sic] man.’ Another notable instance occurred when a middleclass MC moved to Cape Town from Durban, and keen to get some recording completed in his new home studio asked me to recommend some contacts. I recommended my favourite crew, the Archetypes, who I knew would be enthusiastic and grateful about the possibility of free studio time. This MC immediately dismissed the idea and said: ‘Oh, no. I know those guys…I don’t want them freestyling all over my house and messing things up’. Class discrimination was clearly present within different ethnic groups in Cape Town and also happened in reverse where poorer black MCs give their middleclass counterparts a wide berth because they felt they have little in common with them.

6.4. ‘Putting on a show when you got no dough’: hustling for hip-hop

Gary: What is hustling?

Aiden: Hustling is just like you know…putting on a show when you got no dough.

Interview extract

The response given above by Aiden provides one example of the hustling work that directly contributes towards individuals’ hip-hop careers. This section explores how the hustling conditions described in this chapter so far affect music making, performance, distribution, publicity and promotion.
6.4.1. Music Making

Making a recording is a high priority for the underground hip-hop crews of Cape Town. It provides the opportunity to promote their music (either through streaming the songs or offering free downloads through the Internet or providing copies to local and national radio stations) and the possibility of a revenue stream from selling copies. It is also seen as a rite of passage for musicians, something that has to be done if they are to call themselves a ‘proper’ MC. Music recordings can be divided into those which take place in professional studios and those which are recorded in home studios. Due to the relatively high cost of recording, some groups working collaboratively have jointly released mix tapes. For instance, local groups have through working together, have released two joint mix tapes (Battle of Gugulethu I and II). The artists use this strategy in order to spread the cost and risk, endemic in such ventures. More recently, the establishment of a Cape Town based hip-hop label (Pioneer Unit) has given more local artists the chance to make professional recordings.

Although there are numerous professional studios available to rent in Cape Town, the high costs prohibit most hip-hop performers from taking advantage of them. Opportunities to record in a professional environment are scarce because they usually depend upon affiliation with a record label or close contact with a commercially successful producer. Although MCs value independence due to the precepts of authenticity and the negative experiences some have had with record companies, engagement with these institutions is regarded as a necessary evil in progressing a musical career. The following quotes from Ben Sharpa and Uno illustrate that even if the label is small and the owner an old friend, flirtation with a record company is rarely carried out enthusiastically:

Ben Sharpa: I suppose it’s inevitable that I sign [for Pioneer Unit]. It’d take me eight months to do everything they can do for me. So although I’m underwhelmed, I’ll sign.

Informal conversation

Gary: Would you sign to a…

Uno: Major label? I don’t think so, you know? I’d rather release my own stuff and I’d rather depend on my self. I don’t wanna owe people money,
I’d rather do it in my own way, yeah; that’s what I’m currently doing, I’m building up my money to release a project that I’m gonna be pushing and if I fail, I’ve got only myself to blame.

**Interview extract**

For less talented or rookie MCs, these spaces remain elusive, I observed the following conversation between a struggling rapper and a record label owner with his own studio. It is used here to illustrate the inaccessibility of professional facilities to many performers:

Carwell: Do I know you?
Fletcher: I don’t know you might.
Carwell: African Dope [Records]?
Fletcher: That’s me.
Carwell: Me and my crew been saving money, how much does it cost to record at your studio?
Fletcher: It doesn’t cost anything but it works the other way bro. We only work with people we’re excited about, and usually approach them. You’d have to impress us…but, we’re pretty busy at the moment.

**Informal conversation**

If a professional studio is out of financial reach, the next best option is to gain access to someone’s home studio. Although the equipment is less professional, advances in technology mean that a good, if slightly inferior, standard of recording can be accomplished in these places. The importance attached to making recordings was conveyed to me when an informant (the Mad Hatter from Swaziland) couldn’t record in Cape Town so, knowing that he should visit his family sometime that year, decided to fly to Johannesburg, rent a car and drive to his homeland in order to use a studio owned by a friend\(^\text{72}\).

If the proprietor of a home studio is not well known to the performer, one strategy to record is to get on friendly terms with him and the individual characteristics required

\(^{72}\) Unfortunately, this story did not have a happy ending. Before travelling to Swaziland, the Mad Hatter did not check that his friend was available and when he arrived discovered that he was on holiday. Eventually, the Mad Hatter had to return to Cape Town with nothing to show from his efforts except another South African stamp in his passport.
for successful hustling, outlined in the previous section, become important in this task. People with their own studio were typically aspiring producers and often consented to free recording sessions if the work was collaborative, which usually meant that the MC would have to rhyme over the producer’s self-composed beats. One afternoon, MC Midus took me to an expensive apartment block where there was a white sound engineering student from a wealthy family called Dan who had his own recording facilities. Midus spent the first hour rhyming over the producer’s beats before asking for a couple of takes using his own. This was of course the real reason why he was there and subsequently he did not even take a copy of the previous recordings when we left.

While Midus could choose from his own crew’s beats and the ones Dan made, most MCs find it difficult to secure these backing instrumentals. Like the practice of recording in a studio, securing original beats usually requires close contact with a producer. Sometimes money exchanged hands for these commodities but, this was unusual because groups have little cash and also regularly borrow or steal them from each other or even use well known ones from international hip hop stars. Although this situation isn’t ideal, for many musicians it is the best or only option. While it is possible for MCs to compose their own backing instrumentals, the expense and expertise required discourage most.

The relative poor quality of songs recorded in home studios was sometimes not regarded as a disadvantage and even expected among Cape Town musicians. Here a producer expresses his frustration that some of his peers will accept an inferior product:

Arsenic: They’re [hip-hop fans] expecting bad quality presentation, bad quality of the CD and bad quality overall, so I wanted to sort of break that, that perception that people had and some crews were just like ‘I’m an MC’ you know? Quality was the last thing on their mind…you know.  

*Interview extract*

As detailed in the chapter 3, material resources are intimately linked to ethnicity. In the following extract, Arsenic describes the history of how he became a hip-hop producer. It is worth noting that every step along the way required some financial outlay, which most black hip-hop heads would not have been able to provide:
Arsenic: Remember in the day they used to have singles, and there used to be the song, and then the acapella in, so I used to buy shit load of that, so we can use the instrumentals you know?...I got fed up, I got me some cheesy program, you know? The beat was whack, but you know it was our own beat, you know? We could do something original and it was an original track that we did, yah from there I realized you know, maybe this MC I’m not cut out for this…I started getting exposed to more avenues of how I could actually go about making these because, you know that meant it was easy when I wanted to do when I was rapping, or being an MC, all I needed was like a pen and a page, and I could start doing my shit you know, but then after that I was like, you know, what how do I start making beats..., getting some programs, you know trying my way around things and I did my sound course…like a one year audio engineering course, with UCT, all the aspects of recording, mix down and masking and obviously the use of the equipment in the studio and stuff.

Interview extract

In the following interview extract, we can see that the material resources available to Jaak acted as a prerequisite for him being able to produce his own beats. These resources were not available for the majority of his black peers and the stratified educational attainment compounds this division because it means many are not adept or confident in making use of computers.

Gary: How did you start writing beats, making beats?

Jaak: Making beats, that was way back, listen to this. When I was with function three, we borrowed cousin’s Casio keyboard thingy and he could play, could play a couple of beats and top of the keyboard there was like a drum pad…I used to bang out the beats…with this new technology, I wasn’t that clued up to the musical program I didn’t know how to work that, so for this album, I thought ‘yo, you need to school a brother’, so he got me one of the other producers, they got me all the software, I bought myself a PC.

Interview extract

Most of the black performers I spent time with did not have the money to attend college (it varies but the typical rate for a music course is R1500 a year) and this causes a deficit in the technical knowledge of this group. SOV however, a middleclass coloured MC, was able to enrol at a local media and performing arts college which as well as teaching him technical knowledge, also gave him access to expensive recording equipment:
SOV: We finished last week and I am still here at college…even last year, 2 weeks after the college closed, officially…or unofficially…I was still here, bro…recording, writing shit! But, that’s the way you gotta [sic] do it, though.

**Interview extract**

While producers were fundamental in the music-making process, they did not engage in live performance (unless they were also a DJ) and the next section focuses on this aspect of creative practice that was a fundamental component to most of the musicians I encountered in Cape Town.

### 6.4.2. Performance

Most hip-hop gigs began in the late evening and finished in the early hours of the morning. They were also usually enacted in front of a relatively small audience, known personally by the performer. This created an atmosphere of intimacy and collegiality, similar to a house party, where friends, girlfriends and family members made up the majority of attendees. These shows were often enacted in the centre of Cape Town, which meant that most Township acquaintances could not turn up for every performance as journeys home inevitably proved (relatively) expensive, dangerous and challenging. As a consequence of a lot of the audience being social acquaintances there was often reluctance in paying an entrance fee, making it even more difficult for artists to turn a profit. Overall, the proportion of people attending these gigs depended on location, timing and line up. For instance, when Ill-Skillz front man Tommy Jinx secured the services of one of the most famous rappers in South Africa (Proverb), the audience was at least four times larger than usual.

Local bands would often perform together on the same bill with one group taking the lead and stumping up all the money required for publicity, venue hire and transport and subsequently receiving any profit (or loss). There were only a few venues in the centre of Cape Town that were available to perform in because many bar owners had negative perceptions about hip-hop. While some of this was based on prejudice, when people have hosted these shows, they find that they predominantly attract young black people from Townships who do not have much money to spend on beer once they
gain entrance into these venues. For this reason, musicians often had to utilize other places of performance available to them. MC Mangani for instance often used the free spaces he had access to at the University of Cape Town (where he studied).

MCs who wanted to perform usually had to organize their own shows because there was almost a complete absence of local hip-hop promoters. These concerts rarely made much money and after one disappointing evening an MC-organizer sneered: ‘You know Gary, after expenses we’re just working for three beers a piece’. Due to these low or non-existent profit margins, favours had to be called in to organize transport and friends enlisted to help with a variety of tasks like CD seller, DJ, soundman and compère. While anyone can sell CDs, the other duties require a level of expertise and some gigs suffered because of this. On one notable occasion, the soundman at TOP’s album launch was booed throughout because of constant feedback reverberating from the speakers. I also witnessed friends enlisted as compère getting drunk on free beers and arguing with audience members while on stage.

The money and social network it required to stage a successful show in Cape Town, means that it is out of reach for some MCs. For these rappers to get a public platform, they had to either attend open mics or ‘piggy back’ on a gig organized by someone else. One evening Ra showed just how important performing was for local MCs when he walked four miles just to borrow R10 (about 80p) from his brothers so he could gain entry into a club night that was offering an open mic. His brothers thought he was mad because he hadn’t eaten in two days but still wanted to borrow money so he could perform.

When MCs attended concerts and were not on the line-up, they often approached the organiser about the possibility of performing one or two tracks at the start of the show. Through the course of his five year hip-hop career, Lee Urses had become well known just by rapping at other people’s shows, calling himself ‘the ultimate gatecrasher’ and keeping his backing beats with him at all times. This was one strategy of performing without being exposed to any financial risk and was also open to people who did not have enough of a close network of friends/fans to attract a good audience on their own. This is the reason why open mics and ‘piggy backing’ were popular with newer, less established artists.
Performing and organizing performances outside of Cape Town was an even greater challenge for local MCs. The holy grail for many was to tour Europe and some had managed this successfully by either securing funding from a foreign government council (these are predominantly available from the Scandinavian countries) or being approached by European crews, producers or booking agents through their web presence. For most, performing in Johannesburg is the more realistic option and it was felt that to get any national media attention, it was necessary to be known there. DPlanet confided in me:

DPlanet: It’s more and more likely that we’ll have to do a separate [album] launch in Jozi (Johannesburg). People there don’t really take any notice of what’s happening in Cape Town, we got to show the distributor that we’re making an effort.

Informal conversation

Uno: Yeah, we're trying to acquaint them [booking agents]. We want to get bookings, we want to get booked from Cape Town to over there [Europe]. So, for now, we're gonna go there ourselves and prove to them and show them that, yo, this is what we're all about, we dope like that, so you should book us just like you book US artists. So that's how we're trying to takeover.

Interview extract

The brutal fact that many MCs did not have the funds to pay for a trip to Johannesburg did discourage them from going there. Securing a one-way ticket was enough to depart and they worried about other costs when they arrived at the destination. Ill-Skillz for instance organized a tour of Johannesburg, bringing along their occasional DJ Nick Knuckles. While the MCs in the crew are black and from Gugulethu, Nick is white and a full time UCT student from a small mining town, just outside Johannesburg. When they arrived in the city, MC Uno told Nick that they didn’t have any money to hire a car and asked if he could phone his dad to drive to the airport and pay for one. Nick had no option because they were basically stranded so his dad came and reluctantly paid. Later in the year, Nick refused to go on any other tours because he felt he had been ripped off, and said: ‘they’re planning a trip before they’ve even paid me and my dad for the last one.’ Adopting a similar strategy of just worrying about getting to a destination, MC Lingo got stranded in Grahamstown after performing at a festival there and having no way to get back to Cape Town, linked up
with local Rastafarians and sold marijuana for them in order to secure his train fare home.

Publically funded concerts and those organised by NGOs were a welcome source of income for my informants and most usefully, the organizers of these events often agreed to sell merchandise on musicians’ behalf. In the Cape Town environment, where opportunities to derive any significant economic capital are limited, funding became ultra-competitive and struggling against foreign and Johannesburg based record labels, many sought to leave Cape Town in the hope of being more successful elsewhere. In personal dialogues with numerous performers, they expressed their wish to leave for Johannesburg or Europe, many of whom felt that there was too much competition locally and little chance of financial recompense.

6.4.3. Distribution, publicity and promotion

In interviews with performers, I would ask what is the biggest challenge faced by a Capetonian MC. Although the responses were varied, a majority made reference to the difficulty they had in distributing or disseminating their work and this corresponded with what many complained about during informal conversations. A reoccurring complaint was: ‘Hey, we just can’t get our shit out there’. The importance of getting others to listen to their music often superseded a financial incentive and I remember vividly MC Uno taking to the stage during one of his gigs and pleading people to illegally copy his CD and give it to their friends in order to make them more widely known. Local and national media outlets were also systemically blamed for their perceived reluctance to play a high proportion of South African music.

Local artists also expressed the great difficulty they found in dealing with musical retail outlets. My conversations with a wide variety of shop owners and workers revealed that they knew very little about the underground Cape Town scene. This means that when local groups approach them, they are unlikely to order any of their merchandise. A further reason why shops are reluctant to take them is because most local artists did not have a publishing contract so their CDs were without barcodes. When shops do take copies, it is normally on a sale-or-return basis and during fieldwork some of my MC associates expressed difficulty in getting paid once the
CDs were sold. If the CDs were sold, the owners rarely re-ordered. DPlanet argued with owners regularly and could not understand why they did not want to support the local scene, even where there was a (small) market for their products. This created a situation where CDs from Cape Town artists became very hard to obtain unless you knew the musician personally. These conditions meant that artists were forced to sell copies of their music personally, either on the street or at hip-hop shows.

A strategy that emerged during fieldwork was to release an album for free on the Internet and ask people to pay what they thought it was worth. Terror MC became a local pioneer of this method, releasing his ‘Street Life’ album on the website www.aevenger.com and asking fans to pay any amount of money they wanted straight into his bank accounts. The website states:

Ævenger [sic] Camp’s philanthropic model is such that the artist receives a payment for delivery of the completed album. The artist furthermore also receives 100% of the proceeds from the album. The label gets the satisfaction of assisting in making a great piece of art happen. All songs are licences [sic] under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike license.

www.aevenger.com

As previously mentioned, during fieldwork a Cape Town hip-hop label emerged called Pioneer Unit and this provided an outlet that allowed a relatively small number of artists to distribute their work more effectively. This company was also able to publicise and promote acts, which was a further source of difficulty for local artists.

A few groups made the decision to recruit a manager to represent them but overwhelmingly crews managed their own publicity and promotion. The main publicity materials utilized were music videos and press releases and crews usually utilized their friendship networks to get people to take photographs and help them make videos, which were always produced on a shoestring budget. TOP confided in me that he had never paid for a video in his career (he had made 5) and although the locations were usually in the Township because he couldn’t afford to shoot anywhere else, this he maintained, added to the gritty imagery he was cultivating.

Radio and TV stations provide a sought after means of promotional possibilities. The two most significant local radio stations - Bush Radio and UCT (University of Cape
Town) Radio run two or three hip hop programmes in their schedule every week and their DJs were well known and crews did their best to get airplay and appear on shows in the hope that it would benefit the group. Getting played on Johannesburg and national broadcasters was a much more difficult task. This wasn’t always the case however: five to ten years ago Cape Town was the only place in South Africa producing and recording hip-hop music so they used to be played a lot more often. Getting played on international radio (Ben Sharpa is regularly on BBC Radio 1’s play list) and appearance on hip-hop TV programmes (Shiz Niz and Mananzi Rides) rely heavily on already being a well-established act.

Although *Da Juice* was the first hip-hop magazine in South Africa, it was only produced sporadically and had a limited circulation. *Hype* magazine had established itself for about a year before the start of my fieldwork. Part of the appeal of this publication is that it always has a couple of pages dedicated to specifically to the Cape Town scene and also invites local artists to feature on a free CD given away with each issue.
Nearly all hip-hop heads stressed the importance of live performance for promoting their act and any finance received was framed as a secondary motivation.

Gary: So why is it important for you to organise gigs and do shows around Cape Town?

Uno: Well it’s just a way of communicating with our supporters. We pull a fan base you know; so I always think to myself, it’s very vital that you can keep in touch with them always, to always keep them informed about new tracks, new material, style, whatever, you know, cause we are a brand, so we need to showcase. It’s all about showcasing us, the brand, the skills that we have and all that.

**Interview extract**
The development of the Internet has provided a further outlet for groups and artists to promote themselves to a much wider audience. The most useful of these are social networking websites that allow crews to compile lists of ‘friends’ and ‘fans’ for mailing list purposes. The online hip-hop culture is quite vibrant and provides a perfect place for artists to communicate with like-minded individuals in other parts of the world. Bennett and Peterson (2004) have shown that online activity (which has further grown since publication) is now at such a level, that it is possible to speak of ‘virtual’ music scenes, which exist alongside more traditional ones. There has become a transnational hip-hop cultural community, which both by-passes and impacts upon the local scene and establishing a good presence in this arena became an important hustle for my informants.

6.5. (Dis)continuing the hustle

6.5.1. Enduring the hustle

In an interview with Jaak, a coloured and active Afrikaans MC from Paarl (a rural area 60km outside of Cape Town), he began the dialogue by providing a history of his involvement with hip-hop. Jaak said it had all begun at school where he was the founding member of a promising young crew called Function3. According to Jaak, the other members of group were just as talented as him but nonetheless chose to abandon hip-hop in pursuit of more conventional and respectable careers.

Jaak: Melvin now works in Shoprite\textsuperscript{73}, Clifford-he’s an engineer now, Ashley is now married, he’s into bikes and cars, yeah, life happened. I just felt I needed to go on with this thing [hip-hop], because this is what I do, this is what I know.

\textbf{Interview extract}

The content of this chapter has in part shown that low pay and financial insecurities are endemic features of pursuing a hip-hop career in Cape Town so it is therefore unsurprising that the other members of Function3 decided to leave the group. Several

\textsuperscript{73} Shoprite is a South Africa supermarket chain.
other respondents mentioned their continual frustration in the difficulty of making a living out of hip-hop:

Bradlox: Who works for nothing, we’re not slaves any more. I know there’s no minimum wage but, c’mon.

Informal conversation

Even after being actively involved in hip-hop for years, older heads sometimes felt that their economic condition was not very different than when they began. Low pay and insecurities were defining features of hip-hop activity in Cape Town and the outcome for most hip-hop heads was a low level of income compared to the large amount of time invested. What is it that makes the MCs, DJs, B-boys and heads persist in hip-hop, when they continue to face the many difficulties and constraints detailed in this chapter? These demotivational factors were often compounded by the frustration and discouragement vented by family members who did not take the pursuit of a career in hip-hop seriously:

Slew Dadda: No one has ever taken that shit (hip-hop career) seriously in my family…ever…until maybe my one sister came to my house last month to smoke some weed and I busted some freestyle over an instrumental. When people are close to you, they don’t take it seriously…they don’t take you seriously as they take Snoop Dogg, who’s not to be taken seriously at all.

Interview extract

TOP: My girl is coloured, from the suburbs, we met at a party…she believed in me as an MC and that I was going to make it but, it’s going to take longer than we both thought.

Informal conversation

Although generally dismissive of participants’ involvement with hip-hop, some heads did receive family support and encouragement. In the following extract, a local producer contrasts the pressures his peers receive from family who regard hop-hop as a mere ‘phase’ or ‘pipe dream’, with the support received from his, which gave him an extra incentive to persist in the hip-hop hustle:

Arsenic: Surprisingly, they’re [my family] very supportive, they’ve never ever discouraged me with what I’m doing, and I think, I think that is so
what’s, what’s a huge driving force with me, because of what I hear, you know, like MCs always would come by and they’d like you know, they like, oh it’s easy, you know, their parents don’t want them to be into hip hop, or they like think it’s a little phase or pipe dream and shit, but you know luckily with me, and, and you know, and I mean that what keeps, that gives them a driving force as well, they’re like are you know fuck that shit, I’m going to do this anyway. But I mean, I’m been blessed with you know really supportive parents as well and you know, anything that I do you know they’ll support me on everything so yah, I mean it helps a lot because, you know, I always, I always know it gives me that extra drive and just like feel like I know I’m going to make this shit work, you know, because I got the support.

Interview extract

In the following extract, Jaak points to the musical interests of other family members as the reason to why he received encouragement to persist with hip-hop:

Jaak: Growing up with my mum’s uncle and then this cousin that used to DJ, we used to play music all the time, very loud in the house and it didn’t bother them and when I started playing hip hop, still it was cool, it was just me doing my thing…I’ve always had my family’s support, especially my mother…she’s down, my mother’s down.

Interview extract

One reason for persistence is the unavailability of attractive alternatives in the form of steady and well-paid jobs; the national and regional unemployment is so high that a lot of my sample were not even thinking of pursuing formal employment. This observation corresponds to Cohen’s (1991) findings that the economic decline and high unemployment in Liverpool contributed to the growth of a music scene. Hip-hop membership became a convenient and accessible source of resources for my sample as education and ethnicity restricted them from entering most favourable professions. Legitimate capital had become blocked for many and chances to progress outside of hip-hop were severely curtailed. The income fluctuation and low pay that characterises the hip-hop hustle did not affect musicians equally. The effects varied according to a variety of circumstances, such as age and whether or not they had family members that relied on their financial contribution. Generally, the younger the participants were, the more willing they were to invest labour in musical pursuit without any immediate financial reward. In the absence of state benefits, people relied heavily on contributions from partners and parents.
Dla: So right now I’m staying with my moms. It’s not ideal but yeah; I’m staying with my moms. Like a stopgap, I suppose.

**Informal conversation**

For those who do have a fulltime job or family responsibilities, the pursuit of art means these are often compromised (Fagan 2001). A work-life balance was difficult for heads to achieve because there was a tendency for them to work late and long hours. When further commitments like the birth of a new child enter the frame, it becomes difficult to maintain the same level of commitment to hip-hop. Unsocial hours and the need to practice and write new material, establish new contacts and maintain old ones can be restricted as a person leaves adolescence and enters adulthood. People from Cape Town pursuing a career in hip-hop place high intrinsic value on their occupation and are accordingly likely to suffer from what Stebbins (2004) calls ‘uncontrollability’, where they are so into their chosen field of work that they find it tough to control the amount of time they spend on it.

High unemployment meant that many hip-hop heads were not used to dealing with authority figures and some of my contacts favoured the autonomy that accompanies pursuing music as a career, as the following quote serves to illustrate:

**TOP:** I couldn’t be in a box all day, taking orders from a Hitler or a Stalin. That’s why I chose to be an MC man. A dope MC.

**Informal conversation**

Involvement and membership of the Cape Town hip-hop community offers different forms of capital outside of what they would gain if they joined the ‘legitimate’ job market. A constant theme throughout my fieldwork experiences was that being involved with hip-hop is more than just a job. The vast majority of sociological canon devoted to work and employment has the tendency to presume that the main motivation for providing labour is to make money (Lane 1991; Himmelweit 2000; Papandrea and Albon 2004) but the information I derived from my informants indicate that their main motivation was the satisfaction they got from pursuing the path of hip-hop.
Midus: I hope to eventually make money out of hip-hop but, I wouldn’t stop for anything. I am hip-hop, it’s me.

**Informal conversation**

Although many talked about their desire and expectations of making it big, money was not the main reason they pursued hip-hop. Some of the literature on work does highlight the importance of other motivating factors in pursuing a particular career path, for instance, the type and variety of social interaction on offer and its ability to provide a clear sense of identity and belonging (Rose 1985; Bradley et al 2000; Himmelweit 2000). For the hip-hop heads in Cape-Town, the music scene provided them with something deeper and richer than mere material gain. People enjoyed the collaborative nature of their work and the sociability and most of my sample seems to fit into the category of what Stebbins (2004) calls ‘occupational devotees’.

### 6.5.2. Resolving the hustle

So far this chapter has analysed in detail the activity of hustling and how it is pursued to further hip-hop participation. Whether or not the hustle is accomplished or is perceived to have been by an individual depends upon three main factors: their timescale for success, what they judge a success to be and the reasons and accounts they are able to provide for perceived failure.

Peoples’ timescale differs, while SOV realized success might take time, his fellow band members wanted near instant success:

SOV: I was like in 3 or 4 crews, I think. But like, each time I was the last man standing…dudes just didn’t have that commitment, you know. They were in it like a couple of months and like ‘nah! We’re not getting famous’. I was like c’mon…I was 16 so I thought ’10 years, that’s when I’ll be at my prime…so, like I’ve still got another 3 years to go before I eat that.

**Interview extract**

Other artists, like SOV (who was completing a University course), have alternative career paths open to them and display great patience in pursuing their hip-hop goals. Konfab for instance, was a successful engineer and chose to pursue hip-hop with a
relaxed and unhurried manner. Similarly, Lee Urses says that for him, hip-hop is more of a hobby than something he plans to make a career out of:

Lee Urses: Obviously it would be good to make a living out of something you enjoy but I studied Human Resources so, I’m furthering my studies again and I want to do HR but Social Development in Human Resources. So, that means working with youth, you know, to incorporate and get through to kids.

*Interview extract*

Other artists who have limited formal education and experience of employment invest more into hip-hop. Because they invested so much into hip-hop, this group seemed more optimistic about their future hip-hop success.

Gary: What do you see happening in the next year?

Spark: Ah major things, major things; tours, releases, you know, my record label will be popping up, my documentary, hitting the globe, you know, yeah man, stepping up, like stepping up to the plate, blowing up, that’s where I’m heading at you know, I’m pretty confident about that.

*Informal conversation*

Typically coloured artists had more career options than black practitioners, like Spark, who invests everything into hip-hop and hasn’t got an alternative career plan. The second factor determining whether hustling was eventually successful was the size of a musician’s ambition. For Mangani, resolving his hip-hop ambitions entailed setting up a small home studio, setting his sights lower than some of his peers because he was also pursuing a college education. The MC’s diversity of interest also made his hip-hop hustles easier to accomplish:

Mangani: I want to be that person who at the end of the day, I’ve got a small studio or whatever at home, a whole bunch of friends and we just kick back and we just talking about the day we had, and we just chill kick it right, saying rap, it’s like poetry and all of that, but maybe after that, Monday again you go back to money making and focus on money-making.

*Interview extract*

Whether or not an artist perceives himself to have resolved his hustles depends therefore on how they measure success. This will to a large extent depend upon
personal disposition and background. Coloured heads are not in the same economic and social position as many black producers of hip-hop and the hustle for them becomes a slightly different exercise. Having lower ambition is also a luxury for those who have alternative career paths open to them:

Gary: When you were getting into hip-hop, was it something you wanted to make a career out of?

Slew Dadda: What if I open a tourism company and stop rapping...because it’s more lucrative...and fucking rap to my friends who come to visit me at my house? Or like, do shows now and then when I feel like it.

Interview extract

A number of heads said that as long as they made enough to get by, they did not mind the fact that hip-hop would never make them significantly wealthy, like their American peers they read about in magazines and saw on MTV.

SOV: I can remember back in the day we used to perform, dudes used to walk up at shows and be like ‘lets check out the chicks, yo, ‘let’s rock the crowd’ and then we’d get chicks. But now, fuck that crap. As long as I step off stage and dudes step up to me like ‘yea dude, that was a performance’, I’ll be like ‘nah, now I’m satisfied I can go home...fuck the chicks!’...Even now, they are always like ‘what if you blow up, what if you get famous?!’ I’m like fuck, I don’t even want to be famous!

Interview extract

Slew Dadda: But, I mean, the shit is in me...you know what I mean...there’s no way I can really escape it. I’m not going to set too much of a big goal for myself and I’m not trying to disappoint myself.

Interview extract

Although people’s involvement in hip-hop differs remarkably, no matter how small the participation, it allows the actor to regard themselves as a musician or hip-hop head and this confers upon them an element of status. Their continual activity, no matter how small, is significant for some because the intention is to eventually make hip-hop their sole source of paid employment, even if this remains elusive.
Sader: Right now, I’m doing the 9 to 5 thing but what I want to do is what I was doing tonight [performing in a hip-hop show].

**Informal conversation**

Blaming lack of success on external factors can allow Cape Town’s artists to justify their continuation of hip-hop hustling in the absence of success. A lot of heads in the city blamed the fact they haven’t made it on their locality and maintained the hustle in the belief that artists in the region will eventually become commercially successful. MC Jaak blames his obscurity on external factors, like lack of exposure, which he believes will eventually change over time:

Gary: What do you think of Cape Town hip-hop?

Jaak: Fresh. The world doesn’t know it, because the embassy is up in Joburg…hip-hop is urban plant…which is the main urban area in South Africa? Joburg, so obviously that’s where it will be developed the fastest, even though it’s been going on here for a longer time constantly, but financially it’s economics talking. So, it will grow there the quickest, but then the same thing like the States what happened next, people started looking at Los Angeles, that’s like 3,000 miles away from New York, and they were the next to blow, same thing with Cape Town, we are the next to blow. It’s just natural evolution, hip-hop evolution if I can put it like that, natural, the way it is. Later on you will see places like Port Elizabeth, like Durban even being the next Atlanta, being the next Houston, it’s basic hip-hop.

**Interview extract**

The theorizing that the genealogy of US hip-hop can be used as a guide to the route South African rap will take allows Jaak to justify his continual participation by providing an external reason for his lack of success. Aligning himself to other Cape Town artists, this account provides a reason for his relative lack of success, as unrelated to the level of his skill or quality of the hip-hop he makes and therefore allows him to remain optimistic.

6.6. **Concluding discussion**

This chapter has demonstrated how hustling is pursued both as a lifestyle and a livelihood by hip-hop heads in Cape Town. The use of audacity and charm as well as
social and material resources in pursuit of hip-hop activity characterizes this act. A strategy of hustling is often pursued in the absence of economic capital and for many becomes the only way to achieve musical goals within the city’s environment. Some of this activity can be characterized as deviant but the criminal associations of hustling are largely unfounded. Indeed, a hustling disposition is a positively admired asset within the Cape Town hip-hop community and is seen to have its own intrinsic value.

An important individual characteristic for hustling is sociability as it aids networking with a range of diverse actors that can therefore aid a musician’s career profoundly. Although an individual’s character and personality traits play a large part, race largely determines what social and material resources they can draw upon in their hustling endeavours and therefore plays a fundamental role in shaping hip-hop experiences. A significant part of hustling relies upon friendship and trust in the absence of formal economic structure and contracts and although perceived as a precarious way to earn a living, it is largely pursued out of love for the art form that is hip-hop. In this way, the hustle is perceived to be just as much of a lifestyle as it is a livelihood.
Chapter 7. Being ‘real’: performing authenticity in Cape Town hip-hop

7.1. ‘How we roll’

I knew Marvel nightclub quite well and as I entered, the familiar cocktail of stale tobacco, beer and human sweat descended upon my nostrils. This notorious nightspot looked completely different in daylight hours: tidier, more spacious and by contrast, almost blindingly bright. The room remained furnished by a well-worn, patched-up pool table, accompanied by two equally flawed and uneven Foosball machines and the walls were monopolized by an assortment of untidy scribbles, poems and tags penned with thick, dark marker-pens. As the door closed behind me, I brought into focus a crowd of heads mulling around the bar in varying degrees of purposefulness and about a dozen articles of video equipment - stands, cameras, lighting and flight cases - lying idle on the floor. This rundown venue was to provide the scenes for a hip-hop music video, for the song ‘How we roll’, written and performed by Articulate Konfab and MC Jaak.

My informant Lolo, a local MC, had tipped me off about the filming but he was stuck in Langa Township trying to hustle the R7 taxi fare to bring him to town. Luckily I knew the bar’s manager Gerald, who immediately offered me a complementary beer and urged me to join him sitting on the bar, in good view of all the commotion. It was not long before the owner of a local clothing company arrived clutching a large box of ‘wardrobe’, which he initially struggled to lift onto one of the bar’s tables. Seeking to align his brand to the local music scene, Julian was a familiar face at local hip-hop events. Soon enough, some of the extras started gathering around, eagerly surveying the garments. Slightly overwhelmed, Julian attempted to get a handle on the mob by suggesting what jumpers, baseball caps and T-shirts matched and which colour suited each performer. One MC, working as an extra, sought independence from the crowd by insisting that he was unwilling to change the clothes he was wearing because they were made by his friend’s company. The video’s director initially objected, asserting the need for continuity, but soon relented after it was agreed that the MC’s outfit
looked ‘passable’ on camera. While all this was happening the song was thudding in the background…

Ripping reason and rhyme without remorse.
This is how we roll – rugged raw out of control.

In the mist of impotence I bring lyrical virility,
Miracle diction syllable spillage free delivery,
Anything to seal a deal – MC minime ain’t really real as me,

Break your record like raps a sport – catch my last retort
Grate your carrot - fuck fan support

The very title of the track ‘how we roll’ explicitly announces that their lyrics represent an honest reflection of themselves and their experiences. The establishment of this is most desirable because, in hip-hop ‘to be considered real is a compliment of the highest order’ (Boyd 2002, p. 111). My fieldwork experiences certainly confirm this contention, convincing me that hip-hop heads in Cape Town use the concept of ‘realness’ or more analytically ‘authenticity’ as a key mode of distinction (Bourdieu 1993) between those within hip-hop and others outside. Rather than being a state, achievement or condition, authenticity is a construction and within hip-hop culture there are numerous claims that can be made but most prominent of these are claims to hardship (past and present), social-political consciousness, skill (in both hustling and performing) and non-commercialism.

In the song, Konfab is engaged in a battle with an unnamed MC, using this verse to make an argument, the lyricist makes a case for his own authenticity, while attacking his opponent, beating him ‘without remorse’. Declaring his skill as an MC with ‘ripping reason and rhyme’, the rapper declares that his style is ‘raw’ as opposed to well-packaged and presented commercial hip-hop, and affirms this further by suggesting his ambivalence to mainstream success: ‘fuck fan support’. Konfab also asserts his masculine sexuality, another claim of authenticity associated with hip-hop,
by using the imagery of impotence to attack his opponent’s skill. Authenticity is a polemical concept (Trilling 1972, p. 94) and in asserting what is worthy and what is not, the artist attempts to draw boundaries around what is acceptable hip-hop.

Although explicitly expressing ‘realness’, my research revealed that a huge amount of effort and coordination went into representing authenticity, which is essentially enacted as a performance. My recollections of the realities of this day compared to the finished video artefact (I was able to watch the finished product some weeks later on MTV Base Africa and many times subsequently on the website www.youtube.com74) serve as an example of the way local performers claim authenticity within a certain context. Without the cameras and among friends, the MCs were a lot more low-key and relaxed.

The actors in the video were certainly encouraged to perform for the camera. Amusingly, while MC Spades simulated gambling by rolling dice onto the shabby pool table, the director, fearing the over-enthusiastic dice-hurling might crack the lens, sternly instructed him to, ‘act mean but, whatever you do, do not break the camera!’ And later on when Jaak was acting as the hype man75 and brandishing a swinging pool cue, I watched uncomfortably as the director encouraged him to gesticulate more flamboyantly and smiled, nodded and gave the thumbs-up to affirm each exaggerated and unnatural movement that displayed a hard masculinity. Later when I spoke with Jaak, understanding that he had to portray an image in a performance, he declared with a wide grin that although this was his first music video and he was really excited, he had to disguise his emotions in order to look tough for the camera.

In this performance, in order to give a specific impression to the audience and claim authenticity, the makers of the video use the theatrical devices of a script (song lyrics), actor behaviour, clothing, background scenery (choice of location) and props. One of the props used as background, was a poster carefully positioned to proclaim the artist skill of the main performer. Visibly written in a circle to the right of the poster quoting the BBC Radio 1 DJ, Mary Anne Hobbs: ‘*****Pioneer Unit – home to Ben Sharpa and Konfab, two of the most inspired and agile lyricists in the world

74 The ‘how we roll’ music video can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypRhfV_p4CY
75 In hip-hop, a hype man is the person who helps get the crowd pumped before and during a live show.
today.’ After the shoot, I asked Konfab what he thought of the poster and he said ‘it’s dope but, I think it’s too much pressure to say what it says [referring to the quote by Hobbs]. Cats are going to want to battle me and nobody’s going to think I’m doper than MF Doom76.

Understanding that assertions of authenticity are evaluated and validated by others, Konfab was concerned that this claim had to be believable to his musical peers. Conversely, the record company were attempting to establish the music as a quality product and staged the performance with a mass audience in mind. I highlight these different strategies to illustrate the way performances of authenticity are situational, depend on the agents who are going to assess it, and on the valuation process engaged in by a range of actors.

Hip-hop provides an intriguing case study of how authenticity is articulated because while it has become a ubiquitous presence in all aspects of popular culture, it has historical links to black consciousness, oppositional politics and a genuine interest in performers’ authenticity. Scholars like Rose (1994) Smith (1997) and Krims (2000) have argued that performances of authenticity are necessary in establishing the credibility of any hip-hop artist. This chapter analyses how Cape Town artists attempt to establish their credibility through an authenticity meaning-making process.

The first section of this chapter, ‘manufacturing authenticity’, begins by describing the process where individuals become heads and are socialized into the world of hip-hop and acquire an understandings of authenticity. Utilizing the ‘production of culture perspective’ (Peterson and Anand 2004), this section continues by outlining the specific claims of authenticity found in Cape Town, illustrating how the host environment has affected these understandings. Utilizing dramaturgical imagery, the section finishes by analysing the various ways local artists make these claims. The following section, ‘negotiating performances of authenticity’, describes the process where claims are evaluated and artists construct their claims depending on the symbolic tools available to them. The section concludes with a discussion of how local artists resolve the inherent contradictions in trying to make money while remaining authentic. Because authenticity is a negotiable concept, the final section,

76 A highly regarded international artist.
describes the various strategies employed in challenging and defending these authenticity claims.

7.2. Manufacturing authenticity

7.2.1. Becoming a hip-hop head

The oxymoronic phrase ‘manufacturing authenticity’ is used as the title of this section to underline the proposition that authenticity is not inherent in an object but a socially disputed construct (Peterson 1997). This subsection outlines the way young practitioners gain an understanding of what is accepted as ‘real’ hip-hop in Cape Town. The journey where young men become recognized as genuine hip-hop heads can be divided into three phrases: the first, when a person initially encounters the culture and begins listening to the music; the second involving association with others who share an interest in hip-hop and the final step of the journey incorporates public performance.

Figure 7.1. Young pupils attend a breakdancing workshop

The media and these workshops performed an important role in provide elementary knowledge and familiarity about hip-hop and gave some the impetus to begin learning a hip-hop element. Hip-hop distinguishes itself from other musical cultures in that there is no need for technical knowledge and equipment (e.g. the ability to read and
write music, instruments, singing ability) to begin and people often develop their skill by mimicking. Before integrating fully into the culture, it is common for people to become influenced by international artists.

Uno: I’d just imitate my favourite MCs basically, you know. Because Common was like my favourite, when he came out, so everything that I write about sort of revolved around him, you know, I always like imagined myself in his shoes and stuff.

Interview extract

I found that more established hip-hop heads deliberately seek to pass on to young people the beliefs, values, norms and technical abilities that will allow them to function as members of a hip-hop community. Julian describes how time spent with more experienced graffiti artists was fundamental in developing his skill as a writer and learning the rules of his craft:

Julian: I tried drawing graffiti but I didn’t know the rules of graffiti…how to do the lettering and stuff like that. But later, I met friends who also were into it and they showed me how to do the lettering…we met other people who were in the scene for longer. It’s training, you become their little trainee! They show you how it is done…and that’s, I guess, how you get into a culture.

Interview extract

Most learning happens through peer tuition amongst people of similar skill levels. People practice their rhymes in front of each other, improvise lyrics in a very sociable way and a rapport is easier to establish and advice more readable accepted because each person is on the same level. In this interacting phase, informal public and semi-public social settings where young people congregate provide the arenas for further socialization. Gathering spaces like bars, shebeens and people’s home are important to young people in South Africa because of chronic unemployment and a longstanding subordination in the political and education system. Unlike formal musical instruction, the intention is not to learn music per se but a plethora of complementary practices, learn about the music, listen to the music and make the music and dancing. Listening, practicing and performing all happen simultaneously and learning was essentially a social activity. Below is a photograph of such an instance, where a sociable gathering turned into a spontaneous rehearsal.
Figure 7.2. Garlic Brown, Lolo and Midus try out new material

Cliques sometimes developed into crews and being a member of a crew is a popular route and provides an effective forum for socialization because it instigates collaborative efforts with other members of the scene, where artists gradually learn more and more about the accepted rules of the culture. Macho describes how forming a crew early on in his hip-hop career helped him develop as an MC.

Macho: We’ve been coming on a long time, so working and we formed few crews back in high school…and then that slowly evolved the MCing.

Interview extract

As individuals begin to spend more time with others already involved in hip-hop, their experiences begin to connect them to a wider social network of local hip-hop performers and the next stage is tentative performing at open mics or parkjams. Open mics are usually incorporated in live hip-hop shows in Cape Town and involve a host inviting audience members to perform. Uno describes how performance at open mics and parkjams allowed him to learn and develop as an MC:
Uno: I heard about these joints [hip-hop gigs], you know, I started attending them, seeing cats killing it and I was very inspired to be like them, you know, I should do this one day you know. So I started practicing my lyrics and sharpening up my freestyles…Started performing in 2003 by myself, I was a solo cat, turning up to open mics. I usually went up to open mics and park-jams and stuff, you know, there was this open mic session which was held by Archetypes. So that’s where I started rhyming and learning basically, as an MC.

**Interview extract**

Open mics and parkjams facilitate socialization because they provide the opportunity to see what the crowd responds to and also helps create solidarity with other performers and community building. Parkjams are the only public places that amateurs can play to a large and after gaining experience in these places and acquiring more knowledge about what is regarded as ‘good’ authentic hip-hop, the final stage in the personal development of a hip-hop head is performing on the bill of live public shows that people pay to see.

*Figure 7.3. MC Jaak rhymes to a park jam crowd*
7.2.2. Claiming authenticity in Cape Town

Utilizing the production of culture perspective that: ‘focuses on how symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, evaluated, taught and preserved’ (Peterson and Anand 2004, p. 311), this section describes how the host environment of Cape Town influences the types of authenticity claims found within. In general, hip-hop performances have several ideal standards of authenticity to draw upon. McLeod (1999) and Harkness (2006) have examined these and set out several dimensions of authenticity where the most pure, authentic examples of hip-hop is perceived to be a black man from the streets who is old-school, underground, stays true to himself and is also a skilled practitioner. The experiences drawn from fieldwork taught me that these do not directly transfer to the hip-hop scene in Cape Town and should be contextualized.

Commercialism, the mainstream and the following of mass trends are all indications of the inauthentic (McLeod, 1999 and Harkness, 2006). By virtue of being in Cape Town, hip-hop artists can easily align themselves to the underground because of the underdeveloped music industry in the city. Artists often compared themselves favourably with commercial artists from Johannesburg who were regarded as imitators of American hip-hop whose motivation for money motivates them to ‘copy what’s hot’:

DPlanet: The other guys in Jo’burg just copy what’s hot in America right now. I mean Jo’burg is littered with guys like that who just sound exactly like Fabulous and um, whoever, the latest American sound.

Interview extract

The argument that commercialism is a corrosive influence on creativity is well established and Cape Town’s separation, both geographically and commercially from Johannesburg and US artists, allow them to argue that there is more artistic individualism and less of a pressure to conform to mainstream and commercial superficiality. Johannesburg is generally used as a synonym for bad hip-hop and Cape Town a synonym for good. One MC went as far to describe this division as ‘like the East Coast/West Coast rivalry in the US; but without the guns’. During an interview with Slew Dadda, a Rastafarian MC and DJ, the conversation turned to Johannesburg artists. As expected, Slew heavily criticized them for their superficial
style and lyrics, commenting that he thought a much-derided crew, Skwatta Kamp were the worst offenders. Rather awkwardly, I had to point out they were not from Johannesburg:

Gary: Skwatta Kamp are from Cape Town.

Slew Dadda: Are you serious? I thought they were from Jo’burg. But, I mean, I don’t like Swatter Kamp. I think Swatter Kamp sucks…I just don’t like their shit.

Informal conversation

While this isolation is given credit for not corrupting the Cape Town scene, it is simultaneously blamed for depriving Cape Town acts of nationwide exposure:

DPlanet: We’re also cut off from the media here to a large extent. We can’t go smoothing with all the industry parties in Jo-burg, we’re lucky that Manazi rides77 is recorded down here, that’s about the only thing that’s recorded down here…It’s like that to me is a travesty, it has the birthplace of hip-hop in South Africa, it just gets ignored. It’s all money; they can’t afford to send the production team here.

Interview extract

The limited commercial outlets for musicians in the city frames the entrepreneurial activities of artists (this is explored in chapter 6). This lack of exposure allows heads to compare their plight to an earlier ‘golden era’ of hip-hop, before it got fully co-opted to the mainstream:

El Nino: Ah…basically, we are what they were back in the 90’s, you know. We are on that level, when it was highly driven by the culture and it wasn’t about the money or anything. It was just people connecting for the love of the music, so…we are on that level now, yeah.

Informal conversation

The popular understanding that Cape Town has been quarantined from the gradual dilution of original hip-hop values over time is aided by the scene being the first place in South Africa to adopt hip-hop. This comprehension is consistent with the argument put forward by Hess that: ‘within popular music studies, the concept of authenticity often centres on the performance’s proximity to notions of an original culture which at one time existed outside the record industry’ (Hess 2005a, p. 357).

77 The South African version of the MTV show ‘pimp my ride’.
Due to the comparatively long history of hip-hop in Cape Town, heads can more easily align themselves to the ‘old school’, in opposition to commercial and mainstream styles (Krims 2000, p. 55-6). It is a reference to a time before hip-hop became commercially popular and when all elements (breakdancing, DJing, graffiti and MCing) were central to the culture:

DPlanet: There are a few pioneers who really just kept that culture in Cape Town alive, which is why Cape Town artists like b-boys do so well internationally because it is entrenched in their culture.

Interview extract

Local artists imply that the separation from the pervasiveness of the market has meant that they have not had to dilute their creative productions and subsequently have a skill advantage over artists who have a recording contract:

Arsenic: I mean, down here [in Cape Town], you’re going to find, geez like MCs that will chow you, you know? Like you know, get some signed Jo’burg motherfuckers, bring them down here to the street and make them battle, take them down in like two minutes.

Interview extract

Hip-hop is inescapably tied to black cultural expression (Krims 2000) and a ‘black identity is, by default, legitimate, while white identity is either suspect or invalid’ (Harrison 2008, p. 1783). Within hip-hop, the ideology of Pan Africanism has worked to shape black identities (Tate 2005) and led to a romanticization of Africa and an Afrocentric disposition (Maultsby 2000, p. 12). By virtue of being Africans as opposed to African-Americans who often perpetuate this romanticization of Africa, Cape Town artists can use these claims against them to argue that they are innately more authentic than non-African heads. This assertion of African authenticity is aided by the urban myth that hip-hop is a modern manifestation of African activities stretching back millennia. This argument is widely understood and asserts that the DJ has evolved from the drummer; graffiti is the modern manifestation of cave painting; MCing comes from praise singing and the b-boy derives from traditional ceremonial dance. The inlay to a Cape Town compilation CD recording by some of my sample reads:
Africa is the birthplace of rhythm. Through the slaves, that rhythm found its way to the Caribbean where it evolved into Reggae and Dancehall. From there it traveled [sic] to the US where it became Hip Hop. Soon after, it spread out around the world, and eventually back to Africa, constantly evolving and mutating along the way.

Planetary Assault Album, Pioneer Unit

Making use of available discursive repertoires (Swidler 2003) to give meaning to the hip-hop they produce, many of the authenticity claims employed in Cape Town are borrowed from a stock of established and well-worn scripts and similar to those found in other hip-hop scenes. However, this section has shown that the environment of Cape Town negotiates these to suit the local environment.

No matter how much an individual understands and embodies the ‘real’ as part of the authenticity-making process, an artist’s success in establishing authenticity rests on his ability to communicate it to others so it can be evaluated and validated (i.e. claims must be authenticated). However, it is a notional possibility that an artist can be authentic to himself when no one else is interested, linked to the idea that an individual can be his or her harshest critic. Yet in practice authenticity is a relational matter, asserted and achieved in public arenas and while it can be asserted, it only matters when others confer it. Using the dramaturgical imagery (script, costumes, stage and actions) employed by Goffman (1959), the following section analyses the ways these claims are made and performed.

7.2.3. Script and apparatus of theatre

The dramaturgical perspective of human interaction describes the process of impression management through presentation of self (Goffman 1959). This section makes use of this perspective by showing how performances of authenticity are constructed in a variety of ways.

Everyday dialogue is the most personal type of communication and while it is usually improvised, people still put a lot of care into what they say and still adopt the traits that are consistent with the understanding of authenticity they want to project. The previous section described how allegiance to mainstream US hip-hop is a
characteristic of the inauthentic. In conversations, heads were keen to explain why they reject commercial hip-hop:

Mangani: Ooh, commercial hip-hop. I’m trying to cut down. I’ve been trying to cut down recently… it is like a drug… I think it’s brain damaging man, ‘cos when I sit back and I listen to [commercial] hip hop and they’re just talking about, girls, making money, hitters, you know, it doesn’t elevate me in a mental way, it doesn’t develop me in terms of the person I am or the relationships I have or the way I relate to other people… It doesn’t sound real to me.

Interview extract

Mangani, a talented and socially conscious MC from Zambia, firmly established in the Cape Town underground scene, outlines the reasons he has an aversion to commercial hip-hop. After comparing it to a drug - both seductive and harmful - he states that it doesn’t elevate him, doesn’t sound ‘real’, is superficial, gives misinformation and doesn’t educate the audience. This critique of the commercial subgenre is based firmly around discourses of authenticity and in his evaluation the MC is attempting to establish in-group/out-group distinctions by opposing himself to an inauthentic ‘other’ and aligning himself to hip-hop that ‘elevates him’ which he used as shorthand for music that was socially and politically conscious.

Websites and press kits offer increasingly formalized scripts of authenticity. These allow a more detailed and thoughtful presentation of authenticity claims than those provided in everyday dialogue. The following are some examples of authenticity claims found in artists’ biographies on a music website:

He projects the anti-establishment, presently disadvantaged, previously dissed and damaged, seriously pissed-off with anger mismanaged, half-foreign, urbanised darkie that he is.

Music website

He was inspired by the radical new voice that Hip Hop was giving to the disenfranchised and oppressed.

Music website

Heads can also use these spaces to elevate the economic struggles of street life they have encountered. Township life and struggle are used as signifiers of authenticity and truth telling:
Born in the rugged ghetto slums of Soweto, South Africa in 1979

Publicity material

Growing up on the ‘wrong’ side of the Bergriver, in the projects of Paarl East, and was quick to realize the huge discrepancies in Paarl's social structure.

Publicity material

A further often used script involves bringing attention to a long-standing commitment to hip-hop. In this quote, the artist’s long devotion to hip-hop is presented as a guarantee that it is not a superficial interest and also conjectures an affiliation with an older and more authentic era of hip-hop.

In 1992, at the tender age of 11, he (then affectionately known as Sneez) received a thorough ass whipping from his old man. He had snuck out of the crib to perform at a dingy strip joint called Palace Hotel in Teyateyaneng.

Publicity material

Like publicity material, lyrics allow for more reflection before claims are evoked than everyday dialogues. These are made however, under the constraining format of a hip-hop verse. Claims often have to be made in rhyme:

‘..the proper hip-hop product to cop/ toppling popular culture – it rocks!’

Lyrics by Konfab

Here claims are less explicit, and are more likely to be implied using the literary devices of metaphor and imagery. In line with this, in the following lyrics Sudan aligns himself with the armed struggle, calling himself a descendent of the MK leaders who received military training in Russia.

If we're the coldest / I pray the world will notice / We put in action what our fathers taught us / They grew from a solid tree of soldiers / argued to be the boldest / 'cause they ran through Russia when regard for life was at its lowest / Its the hand of their descendant that wrote this…

Lyrics by Sudan

Whether contained in everyday dialogue, publicity material or lyrics, the scripts hip-hop performers formulate project a variety of authenticity claims.
I have used the term ‘apparatus of theatre’ to incorporate all those elements other than script which allows performers to exert a great deal of control over the impression given to an audience. I will separate this analysis into three devices: the costume of the performer, the stage he chooses to place himself and the various actions and behaviours.

Artists also utilize the theatrical device of a stage in order to contextualize their performances. Backgrounds are important to the imagery in photographs and are employed in a variety of ways and seen on album sleeves, publicity material and music videos. Visuals are the quickest way to form an impression, and before even a word is uttered, images allow people to seize upon characters. The stimuli can function to tell us a performer’s social status by showing the physical environment of where he lives. The following photograph of a video shoot shows how the artist Rattex evokes the socio-locality of Township life in his performance of authenticity.

Figure 7.4. Music video shoot for ‘Streets’
Hip-hop artists have a great control over the environments in music videos and publicity photographs and this imagery works to position the performer, conveying character and identity.

The illustration below is a reproduction of a photograph taken of Sole during a parkjam performance. After showing him the digital image on my camera he instantly demanded a copy and said how happy he was that two MCs he and others respect looked like they were really enjoying the show. Afterwards, Sole used the photograph in advertising material and it formed part of his web presence.

Figure 7.5. Ma-b and Dla enjoying a performance by Sole

7.3. Negotiating performances of authenticity

The previous section outlined the range of authenticity claims found within Cape Town hip-hop and how these various claims are performed. This section is concerned with the evaluation and validation part of the authenticity meaning-making process. In this I analyse the voices that are brought to bear and the factors that affect artistic claims (i.e. the desired outcome and the various tools of the performer). The section
concluded with how artists’ reconcile pursuing a commercial career in hip-hop with understandings of authenticity.

7.3.1. Audience

For a performer to be regarded as authentic he needs to be evaluated, validated and authenticated by others. Performances of authenticity become a matter of interpretation, and Rubidge describes authenticity as a property that must be ascribed, and not inscribed: ‘authenticity is…not a property of, but something we ascribe to a performance’ (1996, p. 219). It is interpreted within a cultural framework and dependent upon the evaluator. This section analyses the three key agents of evaluation, which are determined to be: hip-hop peers, fans and NGOs and other outside agents.

Hip-hop heads often use performances of authenticity in order to position themselves in relation to their peers, using it as a mode of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) where status and authority are ordered through alternative taste hierarchies embedded in a youth culture that is apart from the dominant (Thornton 1996).

Macho: Basically these guys that make me want to do more, you know? By listening to them, like, for instance like guys like Tumi, Proverb, my brother Sole, you know. They’re very inspiring. Uno, you know, like if I listen to them, I know I’ve got to be top notch with my next verse, you know?

_Macho: Interview extract_

Macho describes that among musical peers, his skill as an MC works as subcultural capital and crucially, status. Most of the interactions MCs have with their peers are face-to-face and I often witnessed conversations about the varying skill levels of local artists in independent record shops. These provided a space where like-minded hip-hop heads met and discussed their taste in music and argued about the merits of certain tracks and other performers. These shops often sell imported US hip hop releases and underground Cape Town hip-hop that you can’t purchase anywhere else. Other interactions occurred at gigs and in pubs, bars and shebeens. Open mike nights
and freestyle ciphers were also seen to be utilized by young or inexperienced MCs who desperately want the acceptance of more established local artists.

Valuations made by casual listeners and fans are often very different from those made by hip-hop heads. The general understanding among Cape Town artists is that there is an expectation from foreign audiences for them to look, dress and sound distinctly ‘African’. In informal conversations, the European manager of a successful Spaza crew (Driemanskap) told me that international booking agents have told them that they could perform in European festivals if they brought on board an African backing band. The group’s frontman somewhat resented this patronizing discourse and angrily asked me: ‘What do they want from me? I’m from the urban jungle not the fucking jungle’. Things that can be identified as expressions of ‘Africaness’ or ‘blackness’ by an international audience cause some to consciously alter their musical performances. The following artist admitted to incorporating a marimba band in his crew’s act for this very reason:

Lolo: know, because ultimately I feel like for us to expand to get anywhere or get outside the country, we are going to need to solidify our thing with the marimba band….which is happening….which has been happening for like the past four weeks now, you know.

Interview extract

While American products are generally regarded as inauthentic among hip-hop practitioners, it is contradictory that such products are often associated and seen as having more credibility among casual observers and regarded as superior in terms of quality. In these performances a national identity is not celebrated but concealed, the following extract expresses and is derived from the owner of a Cape Town based hip-hop clothing label who was encouraged to make his products look ‘un-African’.

Julian: People told me ‘what you should try and do is you should act as if your company is an international company’ because people will buy it. That’s the sad fact but it was very true. …Because, they knew people…local stuff didn’t have the credibility…and it is so like that…I mean, c’mon! How many local CD’s sell compared to international CD’s?

Interview extract

When interacting with organizations like NGOs, these bodies usually have only an
elementary knowledge of hip-hop and no real stake in the culture. There is therefore no advantage in enacting certain performances of authenticity such as the flaunting of underground status. Instead artists will appeal to a conscious and politically correct social outlook because, if these organizations are non-profit, they will usually be left-leaning and if they are commercial, they will want to protect or enhance their brand image. In a business plan submitted to a flower delivery service proposing that they distribute a hip-hop compilation CD with their bouquets, an MC who has been described by more than one of his peers as ‘an arrogant, racist, misogynist’, writes:

For 5 years we’ve been producing socially conscious urban music…The wholesomeness of the message in our music is complemented by the freshness of your flowers.

Publicity material

As well as quite possibly being the cheesiest line in history, the artist is portraying a positive ‘wholesome’ image of his music that is ‘socially conscious’. One well-known graffiti artist who is responsible for a substantial proportion of the graffiti found on the trains around Cape Town described to me how he had to completely fabricate his own hip-hop consciousness in order to evade arrest. He was just finishing a large piece of a cartoon character on the side of a public building. Discovered by a security guard and accused of being a vandal, Charl replied: ‘I’m no vandal…we’re hip-hop activists’, and in front of him sprayed a speech bubble coming out of the cartoon character’s mouth with the words: ‘don’t do drugs’. The security guard was satisfied with this and agreed not to phone the police. Charl returned a week letter and painted over the speech bubble.

7.3.2. Available tools

Performances of authenticity are also dependent upon the range of tools available to an actor. An artist cannot for instance change his ethnicity or gender so there is a limit to what can be claimed. This strategy has been displayed by Grazian’s (2004) in his ethnography of white Jazz musicians and also in Hess’s (2005a) study that showed how white hip-hop heads who gained a sophisticated understanding of the culture and
immersed themselves in the lifestyle can establish an authentic identity for themselves despite the colour of their skin.

There were instances during my fieldwork where a similar strategy could be seen clearly, amongst white and female performers. Although overall, they represent a small number, the female MCs I spent time with in Cape Town highlight that when they are ever complimented on their skill, it is almost always qualified with ‘for a woman’. There is a real feeling amongst them that they had to be regarded as a skilled practitioner in order to make up for not being male. I cannot think of one prominent white MC in Cape Town and know of only a handful in the whole of South Africa. However, this does not mean that non-black and coloured people are invisible from the scene altogether. Rather, they occupy other positions and perform different roles than most and increasingly assume the role of DJ, graffiti writer, producer or some other kind of musical entrepreneur because these positions entail a financial investment that many black performers find impossible to meet. White individuals, judged as inauthentic on ethnic grounds can therefore negotiate an authentic identity by performing important roles that are inaccessible to others.

After the gig, I was able to steal a few words with Uno, member and manager of the Ill-Skilz crew. We got talking and I said that I found it interesting that all the members of the group live in Townships except the tall white middleclass Afrikaner DJ. Uno laughed and replied, ‘Yeah, it definitely makes us stand out but how many crews have their own DJ and all the PAs and speakers…Nick [DJ Nick Knuckles] brings a lot to the table’.

Fieldwork Diary, 14th May 2007

Some artists however have little room for manoeuvre in the way they manipulate their image and many performative roles remain elusive to them. A popular glossy entertainment magazine once thought that a local Cape Town artist was being low-key on purpose in order to have a distinct and elusive image. I quizzed the artist about this and he said he only gave this impression as an unintended consequence of not being able to afford a mobile phone or new ‘trendy’ clothes. The importance of image is outlined in the following extract from an interview with a the manager of a crew called Floor Star, who describes how his own involvement and financial investment allowed the development of a brand identity:
Romeo: When I saw Floor Star the first time on stage, I just saw a whole lot of passion for me, you know, and, again, honestly speaking, like, no direction at all. It was like a brand with no image and for me it was ... it was like an unpackaged product. We know that it tastes good, but what do you put it in, what is it? You know I didn’t know what Floor Star was all about and for me, when I went to them, I was like, yo, let’s try to package you guys and make you guys a crew that will be known, like create a logo for you, create posters for you, create a website for you, cause in that way, you know, people are gonna get you ... get like in contact with you like for booking shows and stuff like that. Well if you’re performing at some show and then you know you don’t do anything about that ... you don’t follow it up, then that means that, you know, you’re never gonna be known. If you don’t have a website you’re never gonna be known. How do you get people to know you? So that’s how I came about it, you know.

Interview extract

Rhyming in vernacular did not come naturally to most MCs in Cape Town, even though most spoke Afrikaans or isiXhosa in their family home. This is probably the result of people’s first encounter with hip-hop often being through commercial, American, English-speaking rap. Some artists however have move beyond this and have begun to rhyme in Spaza:

Poison: I never really visualized myself spitting in isiXhosa until I heard like cats who are actually doing it and doing it very well. Like there was one cat called Sketchman. He did it in vernac from a long time ago, but he’s from Khayelitsha ... across the years, like especially in the new millennium, like I heard a lot of cats that come to the park jam, giving their shit, and I felt like them. This is possible and now I also do like, I do tracks in vernac.

Informal conversation

Learning to rhyme in a language other than English in Cape Town is a clear instance of how people are socialized into either black or coloured factions. In the following extract, MC Jaak describes how after his first crew, Function Three, split up, his social network facilitated his transition into an uncompromising Afrikaans rapper. Here, his friends were coloured and already held a commitment towards vernacular hip-hop which they were eager to pass onto him. He describes this fundamental shift in his style and language to be his ‘second birth’.

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78 Spaza is a genre of hip-hop in South Africa where lyrics are performed in indigenous languages. In Cape Town Spaza is overwhelmingly performed in isiXhosa and Afrikaans. The genre is named after ‘Spaza’ shops that are small, independent outlets selling a variety of goods.
Jaak: So, later on when Function Three dissolved, I just stopped working and one friend of mine, he’s a producer out in Paarl, he came to my place one day and he said ‘Jaak, why don’t we do a track?’ He had like three beats with him and he left the beats with me for a week, I wrote to it, but he said, ‘It must be in Afrikaans’… and I was like ‘what the fuck, I’ve been missing out, listen to this’ and that was just it. Abstract Afrikaans on a high beat, it was like you could see the streets, you could see the graffiti, you could see the people, that’s how it was, it was like a revelation for me to hear. That was like my second birth and from there I am what I am now, Jaak.

Interview extract

The following subsection focuses specifically on how artists negotiate and perform authenticity when seeking to earn money from their creative endeavours.

7.3.3. Hustling, entrepreneurship and authenticity

![Image of 'STAY FRESH. GET MONEY' t-shirt]

Figure 7.5. ‘STAY FRESH. GET MONEY’ t-shirt
During fieldwork, the Gugulethu based crew Ill-Skillz secured sponsorship from a clothing firm called Head-Honcho and as part of the deal, the collective were required to wear the company’s branded garments, including the t-shirt in the image above, during their live performances and media appearances. In hip-hop vernacular, ‘fresh’ refers to something that is very good, so to paraphrase, the message on the t-shirt asserts that making money is a very positive accomplishment. During one Ill-Skillz performance where Uno, the front man, wore the aforementioned shirt, peers of the group and myself discussed whether the message was intended to be ironic. These peers, mostly fellow MCs, perceived an overt contradiction in the desire to acquire money and being ‘real’ because commercial pressures are seen to conflict strongly with the values of authenticity found within hip-hop, such as artistic integrity and ‘keepin’ it real’. It was further discussed that if a head’s main motivation is to get money, they are the opposite of ‘fresh’…they are ‘wack’.

For these reasons, many artists who were committed to hustling, attempted to assert their ambivalence towards making money through hip-hop:

Mangani: Right now, my mind state right now is you know if I want to make money, if I want to be I don’t know, maybe rich, or whatever dream the rich, whatever, what I need to do is focus on making money if I want to do that, but if I want to make music, I want to focus on making music, I want those two entities to be two separate things.

Interview extract

Mangani continued to articulate his reasons for not letting the chase for profit pollute what he regarded as the purity of his hip-hop production:

Mangani: ‘Cos I know once you start thinking of how to perform your art so you can get some bucks out of peoples’ pockets, you know have to alter the things you write and the things you say and the way things are done, you see...you change your true expression, just for the fact that you might want to just impress people or get people to pay for what you have, it becomes a product, you know, when you commercialize it like that, but my view is I want music to be a separate entity, it’s something that I have even if no ones listening to my tapes or no ones listening to my CDs.

Interview extract
Similarly, in the following quote, Lee Urses refuses to compromise his output and claims that his motivation to perform is linked to his desire to exhibit his skill as a rapper and songwriter, rather than entertaining audiences and making money:

Lee Urses: I’m not there [on stage] to entertain, I’m there to exhibit…either you like it or you don’t…either you’re going to take from that experience or you’re not. It’s entirely up to you as an individual…I’m not trying to force anyone to like what I do.

Interview extract

In this, Lee refuses to accept the conventional wisdom that a claim of authenticity needs to be recognized by others and asserts that he will be his own arbiter.

In order to make financial gain, some individuals accept that they have to compromise musically, which has inevitable consequences for their and others’ perception of their authenticity. On numerous occasions throughout the fieldwork period Gerald, Nick Knuckles and other DJs of the bars and radio stations of Cape Town complained that they were compelled to play ‘Jiggy’ or mainstream hip hop music in order to remain employed as a DJ. Here DJ and MC Slew Dadda explains his reasons for not complying to the wishes of bar owners:

Slew Dadda: I’m not trying to do what thosefuckers [other DJs and MCs who play commercial hip-hop] are doing…sorry. Those guys don’t enjoy work. Joburg has a scene where if you do what appeals to the kids who can afford to buy that shit or who have parents who can afford to buy them that shit, then you basically get the loot or you get sales or whatever.

Interview extract

Even if an MC is interested in or has made money, there is still a strong motivation to not to admit to it. A local DJ, originally from the USA, called Master Cash (a.k.a. Money, Money, Money), is for instance, widely mocked for his stage name and for displaying signs of conspicuous consumption, which are seen as an indicator for the mimicking of commercial US artists.

Hustling then is not only conducted in order to make financial gain, often this is a secondary consideration to the heads I spent time with, whose main craving was to be involved in hip-hop: music rather than the business of music is what brings fulfilment (Giddens 1991; du Gay 1996; Peters 2001). My findings appear to correspond with
the work of Cochran (1990) and Wainwright & Turner (2004), showing that immersion into something with strong intrinsic value can be regarded by participants as a vocation or ‘calling’ rather than just a profession. In the following extract, MC Mangani illustrates the lengths of hustling he went to in order to put on a free show at his University:

Mangani: Yeah I organized a couple of UCT gigs and stuff eh. Recently. The most recent was this semester, yeah at the beginning of this semester. I had the whole live band organized and everything. I really hustled for that. I really stressed out for that ‘cos I had to scout, find a drummer, organize some opera singers…organize a guitarist; a bassist…did the advertising, put up the posters. It was a free event you know? But it was crazy. It was so packed.

Interview extract

Indeed the idea of perceiving one’s interaction with hip-hop as a ‘calling’ rather than ‘profession’ is well suited to the genre where the distinction between amateur and professional is not as clear-cut as to equate someone who does make money a professional and someone who does not an amateur. It was often difficult to separate work undertaken for financial gain and work done as pleasure and recreation. There are many skilled and well-regarded musicians in Cape Town who although they do not make any money from hip-hop cannot be described as amateur. The status of an MC is linked to skill and also the signifiers of skill such as musical releases, collaborations and membership to a hip-hop community. It is therefore unhelpful and imprecise to employ the amateur/professional continuum, suggested by Finnegan (1989) and Cottrell (2004).

One strategy open to individuals in order to appear authentic while conducting entrepreneurial activity is to anchor their hip-hop initiatives in social and cultural activism. This suits the hip-hop performer well because of its linkages to social activism and Black Consciousness. This point is articulated in the following interview extract where Lee Urses goes as far to describes social activism as hip-hop.

Lee Urses: I think hip-hop is one of those elements that has been given to us towards becoming a better being, you know, to take it for what it really is.

79 Rather ingenious and original, MC Mangani secured the labour of four trained opera singers who provided some of the backing beats to his own performance.
Gary: Do you think you’ve gotten better through hip-hop, then?

Lee Urses: That’s the thing, man…I’m doing the workshops with youth now…some stuff at Pollsmore [prison]. You couldn’t describe yourself as a hip-hop head without doing social activism.

Gary: Do you really think it’s that much of a part of hip-hop?

Lee Urses: Yea, to me it is hip-hop. Because, I’m in the process of learning more about myself and doing hip hop, I’ve come to the point of wanting to know more about myself. And where that sits, yea, hip-hop is to blame, you know, for me wanting to become a better person.

Interview extract

In this extract, Lee argues that authentic hip-hop has a transformative power. There’s an implicit contrast being articulated here between inauthentic, commercialized hip-hop that makes money, and authentic hip-hop that makes people. In this sense the whole hip-hop experience is like an extended rite of passage to produce a new person. Immersion in hip-hop through social activism allows the same outcome as immersion through entrepreneurship, further hip-hop participation, to remain the same but allows the actor to sidestep any accusation of not being authentic. After setting up an NGO (the Black Ink Art Movement), Jessie, a frustrated MC for years found that he began getting more success as a performer, through his new organisation. Below is an extract from their publicity material:

We are community driven because we are part of the community we live and we would like to help the community we live in…with art to eliminate rape crimes, and expose the gift of youth to the world. We are teaching this generation and the next generation drama, music, poetry and hip-hop. Through these arts we portray the solutions for issues like HIV, racism, political dynamics, segregation and gender equality.

We usually perform the Goemariti event that is rotating around Cape Town. We perform at U.C.T. Poetry Uncut, we performed at Robin [sic] Island HIV and aids [sic] event, Cape Town festival etc.

Black Ink Art Movement publicity material

As a result of representing this NGO, the MC got to perform at prestigious stages including the historic Robben Island concerts. Due to the limited pay of participating in hip-hop in Cape Town, for many basing hip-hop through social activism and community projects becomes the preferred route.
7.4. ‘Keepin’ it real’ or maintaining an authentic selfhood

Peterson asserts:

The changing meaning of authenticity is not random, but is renegotiated in a continual political struggle in which the goal of each contending interest is to naturalize a particular construction of authenticity (1997, p. 220).

Working as a boundary device, ‘authenticity is implicitly a polemical concept’ (Trilling, 1972, p. 94) and performances of it attribute values relative to the inauthenticity of others. This section describes the power and contestation involved in the process of authenticity construction, detailing strategies involved in maintaining an authentic selfhood.

What can an actor do to counteract accusations of inauthenticity and manage his and other’s perception of him? Depending on the situation an individual can contest the generally accepted categories of authenticity, dispute the accuser’s power to speak or deploy legitimizing accounts. The individual can also argue that no one has the ‘true’ qualifications to judge him because in some cases, the self is the final judge.

A commonly used strategy to defend against an accusation of not being ‘real’ is to contest the established categories and generally accepted understandings of authenticity. As validation plays such a central role in the authenticity meaning-making process, claims of authenticity are negotiable and open to interpretation. Similar to the strategy described by Williams (2006) and Leach (2001), Tommy in the following extract works to subvert generally accepted understandings of authenticity. The MC critiques the existing ideologies of authenticity by questioning the established dichotomy that frames ‘authentic’ hip-hop as the antithesis of what is often labelled as the ‘mainstream’.

Tommy: Like when they see my video on TV they’re gonna be saying I’m commercial, I’m jiggy, I’m this and that, you know, that type of shit. They’re just always looking for scapegoats you know?

Informal conversation

In the following interview extract, DPlanet describes the way he often has to defend himself when being accused of not making ‘real’ hip-hop.
DPlanet: So nowadays I often get dissed in Cape Town for making techno 

hip-hop.

Gary: You get criticized?

DPlanet: Yeah. To which I always respond, ‘I think you’re too young to 

remember where hip hop originated from’. Go out and check out Planet 

Rock\(^{80}\), for example, that’s a style that’s my influence, which is in the hip-

hop I make now, plus all the other things

**Interview extract**

Damien describes how he is able to contest the accepted standards of authenticity and 
defends himself by indicating his long affiliation and extensive knowledge of the 
culture. This permits him to gain metaphorical higher ground, assert his own 
privileged position in understanding that electronic hip-hop beats were present in the 
inception of the musical genre that most hip-hop heads would be unaware of.

Musicians often become frustrated when they are judged inauthentic for pursuing a 
commercially successful career. In order to counter this accusation, some actors work 
to undermine the established hip-hop dichotomy of ‘underground’ and ‘commercial’ 
and argue for a more objective critique of musical content. In the following extracts, 
both Uno and TOP seeks to do this and argues that the underground has no innate 
quality in itself:

**TOP:** I mean, right now I’m just going about it in a commercial way, you 

know. And for me, commercial and underground only means that one is 

known and the other is not, hence, you’re underground. Whether you are 

commercial or not doesn’t really state what type of person you are or what 
you really aren’t or what your music is about.

**Informal conversation**

Uno: Commercial for me, like the meaning of commercial just basically 

means, like logically means that you’re selling, just selling and any 

underground artist sell; any underground artist is able to sell as well, so the 
minute you have a barcode on your CD, you’re commercial.

**Interview extract**

\(^{80}\) ‘Planet Rock’ is the name of an influential hip-hop track released in 1982 by Afrika Bambatta and 
the Soulsonic Force. The track appeared on an album release in 1985 with the same title.
A further defence mechanism in protecting an artist when evaluated as inauthentic is to dispute the value and authority of the evaluator. After watching a Cape Town music video, an online Johannesburg-based music critic and industry insider, made a blistering attack on the artist Rattex entitled, ‘This is what is wrong with our music culture – Rattex\(^{81}\) is poison’.\(^{82}\) The blog drew many responses and is presented below, in a modified format so accusations and counter-accusations become more comprehensible.

A: Is it so tough to be local that you mimic American artists down to the background colour of your music video… Can you deny the blatantly copycat approach of his video to that of Pharrel and Snoop? You can’t.

**Blog extract**

In this first exchange the accuser attacks the format of the video, arguing that it mimics similar artists from the United States.

D: I have to assume that you haven’t seen many music videos. Pharrel and Snoop didn’t come up with the idea of shooting a video in studio with an infinity curve. It’s an economical way of getting a relatively slick looking video (no locations - no expensive lighting set ups). Are you going to criticize Beyonce for copying us? - she shot the video for ‘Singles Ladies’ after we did the Rattex video.

**Blog extract**

In defence, Nic is counter accused as being unknowlegeable about hip-hop and music videos in general. D also attacks his assumptions in presuming this type of background was done out of mimicry when in fact it was the outcome of economic considerations. The blogger subsequently attacks his ignorance of hip-hop and accuses him of a misunderstanding or misinterpreting of motives for employing these theatrical devices in this performance.

A: What goes through the head of an artist who claims to be from the flats, to embrace South Africanism and then puts on a music video feature his hommies, big cars, bling, scantily clad women and a distinctly western flair to it. Rattex stereotypes himself…as a typical black rapper from America rapping about his money, his cars and his women.

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\(^{81}\) Rattex is a well known rat poison available in South Africa.

D: Have you actually listened to Rattex’s album? Do you speak isiXhosa? Have you ever been to Khayelitsha? In short, do you have any idea what you are talking about? Don’t you see the irony in a white South African of European decent accusing a black South African of not being ‘African’ enough? Rattex is not talking about his money, his cars or his women - but you wouldn’t know that because you don’t speak the language!

Blog extract

Legitimizing accounts are the most often transmitted justification used by artists when their performances are evaluated as inauthentic. Due to the close association between inauthentic hip-hop and American hip-hop, a large faux pas in Cape Town is to appear to be mimicking an American style or accent. General understandings in Cape Town are that their artists’ ‘realness’ is their main point of departure from American and Johannesburg based artists. One artist who does get criticized for sounding American is MC Hyphen, who recounted to me a time he got heckled and booed off a stage by an unforgiving audience. He subsequently said the harsh treatment was unreasonable because his accent is the outcome of learning English through American films and hip-hop music. In the following extract, while agreeing in principle that it is wrong for South Africans (like Hyphen) to display an American accent in their rhymes, DPlanet is also quick to legitimize and provide an excuse account for an artist signed to his own record label who has faced the same accusation.

DPlanet: I really have listened to the arguments for it like people grew up listening to American hip hop so that’s how they learnt to speak English but, I can’t buy that because it’s not really true for a start. I mean, I don’t see how you can lose your accent to that extent. To me it’s just because that’s cool. It’s the same thing in England, it took a few brave people to come out and start rhyming in English accents and everybody going, “Ah, that’s terrible, you’ll never succeed with that” and hear exactly the same thing said today about vernac: it sounds like Kwaito, it’s not real rapping. I hear the people saying that and I think they sound like clowns. I find it, I can’t listen to it. I think it’s embarrassing, just people making a mockery of themselves. I mean it’s different from someone like Ben Sharpa, who grew up in the states that acceptable….He’s got an excuse and I don’t mind that at all. I’ve heard him speak Zulu and he speaks it with a slight American accent.

Interview extract

Accepting the animosity towards South African artists aping the US style, DPlanet employs an excuse account to describe why his own artist, Ben Sharpa, is a ‘special
case’ and should be exempted from these standards of authenticity. If MCs early style met this unwanted standard, they usually frame this transgression as part of a learning process and take for granted that past sins will be forgiven if admitted and confessed openly. In the following quote, a head describe how their tastes have matured to only embrace conscious and substantial hip-hop.

Lucky: So it started like in a very fun way, I was used to writing rhymes and not caring about, yeah, find the dopest punch line and all that mattered was the rhyme scheme and the flow and just come through with a crazy concept and just write; it was just about fun you know. It’s very different from what I’m about right now.

Informal conversation

7.5. Conclusion

There are numerous ways a hip-hop practitioner performs authenticity and can claim it in multiple ways. Evaluations of authenticity depend upon the audience and the types of capital available to an actor. The practice therefore is enacted within the relationships people share with each other and their surroundings.

Cape Town artists put a local spin on their engagement with hip-hop by arguing the movement in the city is underground and authentic. Even though they are shaped by discourses circulating at the national and global level, understandings of authenticity have to be understood in distinct locations because the environment in which they are created always shapes the symbolic elements of a culture. The distinct, local manifestations of authenticity outlined in this chapter shows how ideology operates at the everyday level. An immense flexibility is inherent in the concept of authenticity and it is robust enough to incorporate multiple understandings. It is clear that cultural boundaries surrounding the concept of authenticity shape the way Cape Town hip-hop practitioners think, act and conduct their artistic activity and while these cultural producers treat these understandings as taken for granted, boundary work can often be strategic and deliberate and these boundaries are subject to on-going negotiation and struggle.
Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary and reflection on what my research reveals about the Cape Town hip-hop scene. In this I outline some of the most salient methodological issues that arose from the study, assess the extent to which the aims that were outlined in chapter 1 have been achieved, establish the empirical and theoretical contribution this thesis makes, and finish by suggesting areas for further research.

This thesis has articulated the social world of hip-hop heads in Cape Town and while in terms of sales, size and influence many might assume this scene to be insignificant, the reality shows an elaborate world that sheds important light on the everyday realities of young males in a post-apartheid city. This thesis has demonstrated how the unique urban social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of this divided region combine to frame the experiences of those who pursue hip-hop. Within this metropolitan environment, young people are shown to appropriate and renegotiate global cultural flows to construct a distinctive hip-hop scene.

Framing hip-hop as a group and social activity, this thesis drew on the concept of community to explore the type and structure of social relationships that members of the scene enjoy. It then presented an investigation of the various ‘hustles’, or non-artistic works that must be enacted in order for members of the scene to pursue cultural production. The ‘hustle’ is characterized here as a series of acts that attempt to overcome the overarching experiences of marginalization and disempowerment that people in Cape Town experience. The aesthetic features of the culture was shown to be shaped by a contestation among a variety of actors where various values and interests are expressed and negotiated to determine what is understood as ‘real’ or authentic hip-hop.
8.2. Contemplations on method

The central role that serendipity and good fortune play in an ethnographic study like the one I undertook makes it almost impossible to foresee what opportunities would present themselves if I were to replicate the study. One mistake I might have made in this research was to aligning myself so closely to certain artists. As fieldwork was so intensive and long term, I naturally became more attached to some, for me this happened to the extent that an initial informant became a roommate and remains one of my closest friends. Due to the various alliances and rivalry between performers in Cape Town, my friend’s enemies became my enemies and this excluded me from close and intimate interactions with others in the field. This however, is perhaps more of a trade-off than an error or mistake because it was through such close relationships that I was able to retrieve the most valuable and personal types of ethnographic data.

Another change I would possibly make is to be more selective in the formal roles and responsibilities I took on. For instance, although working at UCT radio gave me insight into the workings of a community radio station and allowed me to initiate contact with a range of artists, it also put me in a straightjacket in some respects because I was required to be at the studio late into Tuesday and Thursday nights, causing me to miss some important shows as well as making me decline invitations to other social events which might have provided further networking opportunities.

One of the issues that preoccupied my thoughts after I returned from fieldwork was how my gender affected the overall study. The first question I ask myself was: ‘would a female have found it more difficult to establish herself in this research setting?’ My experiences led me to conclude that if a female took my place and conducted an ethnography on the male dominated hip-hop scene I encountered, her experiences would have diverged significantly from my own. Most significantly, relationships with research informants would have been qualitatively different and the researcher would have retrieved different insights. While the difference would be substantial, the effect of gender would vary between different fieldwork sites. Establishing rapport, especially in a ‘street style’ ethnography like mine, are more difficult for researchers whose personal characteristics diverge from the people they study. The relationships that evolved during research were certainly aided by a common gender because as a male, I think I was accepted more fully as a group member. However, my identity
was also different in some important respects: I was white and European while the overwhelming majority of participants were not. A female researcher would certainly have encountered a different interactional-dynamic and while my research sample may have perceived a female researcher more warmer and less threatening, she would also have been more vulnerable.

8.3. Empirical findings and theoretical reflections

This research provides insight into a specific group of people, working in a specific area at a specific time. Specifically, a contribution is made towards the understanding of the everyday lives of hip-hop heads in an environment where the wounds of apartheid have not fully healed.

It was shown in chapter 5 how the experiences of exclusion and prejudices omnipresent in the wider South African society shape the range and type of social relations within the Cape Town hip-hop scene. Specifically, this chapter showed, that although there is overlap and attempts to reconcile them, the hip-hop scene is roughly split among black and coloured practitioners. Internal processes of socialization, identity formation, solidarity, cooperation and collaboration facilitate membership to these two factions and it was also shown that these separate groups also work to create barriers around themselves which exclude others and that these efforts are aided by the differentiation, inequality and discrimination. As individuals continue to move through a post-apartheid social environment, efforts to integrate these groups have been instigated to a varying degree of success. It has been shown that positive factors encouraging integration include the degree of meaningful contact and the ability to instigate a musical culture of meritocracy. It has further been shown that broader processes of globalization have worked to widen the musical networks of hip-hop heads beyond the region of Cape Town to spread around the world. While these developments have been fostered by the greater potential to travel large distances, the capability of Internet communication means that some forms of affiliation can exist entirely online.

Despite high levels of unemployment and a deficit of material resources, chapter 6 reveals that hip-hop heads utilize a variety of resources at their disposal in order to
instigate or continue hip-hop cultural production. This is often a continuing struggle where they are required to negotiate the informal economy within a complex and divided urban environment. Specifically, there are difficulties in negotiating the geographical landscape and move from Townships, where many of my respondents lived, and to the central area Cape Town, where most profitable opportunities are found. There was also a need to satisfy more basic and subsistence needs before people can begin to directly pursue hip-hop related activities like music making, performance, distribution, publicity and promotion. Although their working lives were difficult to sustain and hip-hop related employment was limited and pay generally poor, artists demonstrated a long-term commitment to hip-hop and showed resilience and determination in continuing hip-hop production. This was found to be because artists received a high degree of sociability and fulfilment from these activities and also because of the limited provision of attractive alternatives for young people in the region.

Chapter 7 departs from the other empirical chapters in that it concerns the creative element of hip-hop production. It has been found that, consistent with hip-hop found elsewhere, the concept of authenticity is used as a key mode of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) in assessing the worth of artists and the cultural artefacts that they produce. There are several ideal standards within the wider culture of hip-hop but these are also locally comprehended. Because hip-hop activity in Cape Town largely takes place outside of the commercial and musical industries, it allows artists to align themselves and the overall scene with the ‘underground’ – a concept that stands in opposition to more mainstream and commercial styles. Local political, ethnic, tribal, regional alliances are also articulated to evoke authenticity and it has been shown that authenticity is constructed differently depending upon context and audience and the various resources (e.g. symbolic, financial) available to an artist. Musicians therefore receive a validation, or authentication depending on the style of hip-hop they produce and the audience judging them.

Individual experiences among those who pursue hip-hop depend upon a range of factors in Cape Town but the greatest determining factor is revealed to be membership to either ‘coloured’ or ‘black’ racial classification. The account I have provided here reveals how the wider social, cultural, economic and political landscape
shape the social relations, entrepreneurial activities and artistic judgements within the hip-hop scene and that all these elements continue to emerge side by side and relate and influence each other. For instance, community membership will provide an artist with distinct opportunities and constraints in their entrepreneurial activity and also affect the way they creatively produce hip-hop and the ways that these cultural artefacts are judged by others.

This research provides a case study of the interplay of the local and the global as constituted in what I term ‘the Cape Town hip-hop scene’. It has shown how local conditions have combined with the more obvious influence of technological development, commercial force of global hip-hop to provide a unique scene revolving around hip-hop. Beyond this, the research has had to be selective in the theoretical literature it has drawn upon and this has been a complex task. While I have shown how it makes sense to analyses the themes of community formations, entrepreneurial activity and artistic production, in an exploration of this hip-hop scene, they cannot easily be resolved and integrated theoretically.

Largely because hip-hop heads regard themselves to be a component of a globally imagined community (Anderson 1983), they are able to develop multilevel identifications (Petrova 2009) ranging from local cliques to incorporating all hip-hop enthusiasts throughout the world. These broad identifications can take a new lease of life in the modern era because there are fewer constraints tying people to place and new technologies has empowered people to stretch beyond the geographical confines of their immediate community and this has produced new experiences.

To further hip-hop activity and in the absence of economic resources, participants work within the informal economy, seeking to make use of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). My work contributed to literature on working lives when the motivation was not solely about making money but on the type and range of sociability it offers as well as providing a clear sense of identity and belonging (Rose 1985; Bradley et al 2000; Himmelweit 2000) and that non-artistic work is often a prominent feature of artists’ lives (Baines and Wheelock, 2003; Bain, 2005).

This research shows how a variety of interests converge to construct what it understood as authentic Cape Town hip-hop. This research also highlights that the
concept of authenticity is evoked as the central mode of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and following on from Peterson (1997) in seeing authenticity as a fabrication and that understandings of this concept emerges in complex ways and from a combination of influences. I have shown the hip-hop head to pursue a type of reflexive production where he works to control how others perceive him and the hip-hop he produces. Projections of authenticity work as a form of impression management (Goffman 1959) and are made out of the various tools available to the actor, their personal motivations and the target audience. For this reason constructions of authenticity are made and remade and highly context dependent.

Overall, these themes have shown that hip-hop should not be seen in isolation, but part of the activities and dynamics that surround people’s lives and the entire Cape Town hip-hop scene.

8.4. Contribution and further research

By looking closely and engaging with the everyday practices of heads and observing how the social and cultural environment of Cape Town affects the local hip-hop scene, the research has shown the importance of putting ethnography at the heart of studying the reception of foreign cultures.

In bringing into focus some of the aspects that are typically ignored in studies of hip-hop (which have overwhelmingly adopted a textual approach), this research indicates the benefits of looking at a variety of aspects that surround a musical scene. The themes of community formations, entrepreneurial activity and artistic production have allowed me to look at the transnational culture of hip-hop in a new light. These topics have also allowed me to look at the social world holistically and demonstrated that hip-hop practices should not be seen in isolation, but as part of the entangled dynamics that contribute in making a distinct musical scene.

The research has also made a contribution to showing how local populations are not passive recipients to incoming global culture and to work within the sociology of music that conceives of music as a process. This study also performed the important task of foregrounding the issues of class and race, which have largely been absent in
studies that discuss cultural globalization and hybridisation (e.g. Nilan and Feixa 2006). Specifically, I found Cape Town an ideal site to explore these dimensions because of the unequivocal and visible differences and division among racial groups in the city.

The research presented in this thesis has made a start in providing in-depth ethnographic exploration of some of the complex ways hip-hop is constructed inside South Africa. Through the various stages of the research and writing up process, a selection of topics has surfaced which merit further research. While an exploration of these issues is beyond the limits of inquiry for this thesis, it is nonetheless helpful to explicitly identify these here because they provide a direction for further investigation and also highlight the limitations of this project. The importance of these supplementary studies to this project derives from the place of young people in the contemporary volatile environment of South African society where they make up over 50 percent of the population but are increasingly faced with insecure and perilous future. Crucially, the present provides a pivotal historical transient moment, where the wounds of apartheid are still fresh, sore and poorly treated. It is probable that the constraints and opportunities available to young people pursuing hip-hop are replicated, or at least have similarities to young people who have appropriated other musical cultures and pursuing other professions and I think this warrants further exploration.

The central suggestion is that the questions posed here are expanded to incorporate other regions of South Africa. This would provide a more complete portrait of the world of hip-hop in South Africa, and provide the basis of a comparative study between hip-hop in other cities and more rural areas. These different contexts are likely to produce different findings than the ones presented here. I hypothesise this because Cape Town, compared to Johannesburg has an undeveloped media and musical industry and overall the region has a unique ethnic and spatial composition.

Further research is also needed on the continuing developments of the Cape Town hip-hop scene. Since leaving the field and bringing a close to the main phase of data collection, I have visited Cape Town (as part of an institutional visit to a University there) and remained in close personal contact with many of my informants. I have been surprised by the maturation of the scene: more and more local artists have toured
Europe and there has appeared to be a tremendous growth of interest by commercial and media actors both within South Africa and further afield\textsuperscript{83}. I think it would be productive to explore the themes highlighted in these new and fast moving circumstances.

Human behaviour is never static and musical scenes develop and diminish, people join them and people leave them, and therefore the data retrieved would be fundamentally different. As a researcher and as a person, I have also changed, becoming slightly more cynical and world-weary and would not approach it with the same naivety. This is not to underplay the value of naivety; indeed in ethnographic research it can be a virtue because people are more likely to give more away when they do not take your knowledge for granted. I have also developed close bonds and strong relationships with some informants so the flow of information, which is dependent upon social role, would also change.

Within another locale, replication becomes even more difficult. While there are attractions in carrying out a similar study in another area of South Africa with a vibrant hip-hop scene, like Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg, because of the uniqueness of the Cape Town region (outlined in chapter 3), employment of the same methods would elicit very different types of information. If I were to replicate it outside of South Africa, the differences would be even more exaggerated. Instead of performing an exact replication, future research would however perform the virtuous task of complementing this initial study.

\textsuperscript{83} Controversially, the influential French music magazine, Visual Music, has hailed Cape Town artist, Ben Sharpa as the ‘King of Grime’, overlooking more established and platinum selling artists like Dizzy Rascal.
Appendices

Appendix A: Characteristics of informants I had prolonged contact with during fieldwork (n=67)

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<tr>
<td>Coloured Township</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Under 20</td>
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<td>20-25</td>
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</tr>
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<td>26-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>South African</td>
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<th>Main hip-hop activity</th>
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<td>MC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-boy</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti writer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
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<td>Musical entrepreneur</td>
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<th>Hip-hop activity by ethnicity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti writer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music entrepreneur</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>
Appendix B: Interview respondents

A. DPlanet/ Record company owner/ Age 36/ White
B. Julian/ Hip-hop clothing label owner/ Age 27/ White
C. Macho/Solo MC/ Age 23/ Black
D. Jules/ Graffiti artist/ Age 22/ Coloured
E. SOV/ Solo MC/ Age 22/ Coloured
F. X the 24th Letter/MC in crew/ Age 22/ Black
G. Lee Urses/ Solo MC/ Age 26/ Coloured
H. Romeo/ DJ/ Age 27/ Black
I. Lolo/ MC in crew/ Age 27/ Black
J. Mangani/ Solo MC/ Age 20/ Black
K. Sudan/ Solo MC/ Age 30/ Black
L. Uno/ MC in crew/ Age 24/ Black
M. Slew Dadda/ Solo MC/ Age 23/ Coloured
N. Hatchet/ Solo MC/ Age 19/ Black
O. Jaak/ Solo MC/ Age 30/ Coloured
P. Arsenic/ Producer/ Age 25/ Coloured
Q. Check/ Solo MC/ Age 23/ Black
R. Abstract/ MC in crew/ Age 26/ Coloured
S. Mercy/ Solo MC/ Age 21/ Black
T. Aiden/ Solo MC/ Age 26/ Coloured

*All interview respondents were male
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