

A Platform for Women's Experiences? A Case of the Hip Hop Scene in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape

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by

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Abstract

The main aim of this research is to examine the hip hop scene in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape and whether hip hop can serve as a significant platform to discuss women's lived experiences. This study also places focus on how female rappers construct their rap personas, as well as how they are perceived by their male counterparts. In order to understand the multifaceted viewpoints, it was necessary to interview both male and female hip hop artists. Eight interviews were conducted with eight young black rappers who are actively involved in the Grahamstown hip hop scene.

It was found that hip hop, like any other art form, is a significant platform for women to express themselves, however gender constraints limit who is willing to listen to and promote their music. Male rappers advocate for women to talk about their stories, yet are more unlikely to listen because it does not relate to their struggles.

In addition, there seem to be four specific tropes that female rappers choose to construct their identities from. Female rappers tend to create their personas around: Queen Mother, Fly Sista, Bitch with Attitude, and Lesbian. However, these categories are fluid and it was found that women navigate these categories depending on their audience and message they want to convey at a particular moment.

Lastly, there is a split between Grahamstown West (Rhodes University) and Grahamstown East (township). University students are unlikely to perform in the township, and township residents rarely perform at organised events in Grahamstown West. In addition, Rhodes University students are more likely to feature on the university run radio station, rather than Radio Grahamstown, the local community radio.

(Keywords: hip hop, black feminism, hip hop feminism, intersectionality, female emcees, Grahamstown)

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For my familia: Dedi, Mama, Giggs, Teps, Nona, Lisa, El Onc and Bordeaux.

To the Kabwato clan – we are made of sterner stuff. Always and forever.

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And to my supervisor, thank you for your unending patience.

Abbreviations

BCM – Black Consciousness Movement

BVK – Brasse Vannie Kaap

FRM – Fingo Revolutionary Movement

HHP – Hip Hop Pantsula

POC – Prophets of da City

NWA – Niggaz with Attitudes

RMR – Rhodes Music Radio

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

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Sasha Nyasha Kabwato

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Fields of Research

The fields of research are the sociology of gender and the sociology of music, with a specific focus on the area of black feminism and intersectionality in the hip-hop scene in Grahamstown, South Africa.

1.2. Context of Research

This thesis provides an insight into the nature of the hip hop scene in Grahamstown, and to assess whether it is a platform for artists to raise women's issues and experiences. The main research question for the proposed study is: "Does the hip hop scene in Grahamstown allow for women's experiences?" These experiences are broadly defined as anything that affects groups of women, but is not solely limited to them. The intent of the research was to explore conscious hip hop artists through the lenses of black feminist theory and intersectionality. This research explores black feminism as an important part of hip hop, as a living politics. It was strongly motivated by the lack of visibility of black female hip hop artists in Grahamstown. Hip hop and rap music are present all over the Eastern Cape, but this research was restricted to an analysis of the hip hop scene in Grahamstown.

Hip hop emerged in the 1970s in the United States (Keyes, 2002). Hip hop culture comprises four core elements. This thesis will focus on the first element – MCing. A distinction must be made between rap (MCing) and hip hop. The most widely quoted definition is provided by American rapper KRS-One who described rap as "something one does or performs" and hip hop as "something one lives or experiences" (Keyes, 2002: 6). Rap is the verbal component of hip hop, through which a new worldview is communicated - one that reflects personal and social perspectives (Forman, 2009; Kitwana, 2008). Rap and hip hop are inextricably linked to race, cultural politics and ideology (Forman, 2009: 2).

According to Clay (2003), hip hop culture has been praised because of its linkages to black political power, its illustrations of the black lived experience, and its ability to motivate and speak to black youth. Hip hop has become one of the most influential social and cultural movements for youth in the world (Chang, 2005). Watkins (1998: 65) argues that hip hop culture is a clear example of the agency of black youth and "has developed into a fertile reservoir of Black youth production". Lipsitz (1994: 36) also states that hip hop "brings a

community into being through performance, and it maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair”. Hip hop is therefore an important tool to articulate one’s lived experience, and it is in this context that the research will be conducted.

This research focuses on conscious hip hop, a strand of hip hop. Conscious hip hop (also known as socially conscious hip hop or political hip hop) is committed to “an overt politicised discourse that poses an analytical critique of social issues and concerns, especially those that impact the economically or racially disenfranchised citizenry and the nation’s black communities in particular” (Forman, 2009: 5). It developed with various artists emerging from protest movements such as the Black Power movement, anti-apartheid action on university campuses, anti-police brutality movements; and gained momentum in the mid-1980s and 1990s (Chang, 2003: 18). Female rappers like Queen Latifah, Lauryn Hill and Salt-N-Pepa offered lyrics with a feminist agenda (Loots, 2003).

Conscious hip hop is music that is socially aware and “connected to historic patterns of political protest and aligned with progressive forces of social critique” (Dyson, 2007: 64). In addition, apart from a few conscious rappers, the subgenre is not mainstream (Chang, 2003: 17). The research will therefore only be focusing on underground hip hop, and not mainstream hip hop in South Africa.

Hip hop culture in South Africa emerged in the early 1980s in Cape Town, particularly amongst young ‘coloured’ people (Künzler, 2011: 28). It developed as a form of resistance to apartheid (Khan, 2010: 150). The hip hop scene reflected issues of socio-economic and political oppression similar within American hip hop (Khan, 2010: 153). Rap groups Prophets of da City (POC) and Black Noise were involved in anti-apartheid resistance and, along with other rappers, were committed to ideals of Black Consciousness, which were seen as essential to the base of the resistance movement (Haupt, 2008; Künzler, 2011: 29). After 1994, other social groups involved themselves into the rap scene, especially in Cape Town and Johannesburg (Künzler, 2011: 29). All-female rap group Godessa was one of the first female hip hop groups in the country and was influential in establishing hip hop culture in South Africa (Clark & Koster, 2014: 165). The critical appropriation of hip hop in South Africa can also be seen through the use of local languages.

Watkins (2010: 27) suggests that the hip hop scenes in the Eastern Cape are a response to the realities of a neo-apartheid context, in a region where lack of development is apparent, and

there is relative isolation from the rest of the country. Hip hop is a tool to raise consciousness; to talk about the poor, the situation of women – these challenges are global and transcend borders (Watkins, 2010: 33). There is a stress on authenticity, “keeping it real”, and identity (Clay, 2003; Watkins, 2010). There are notable figures in the Grahamstown hip hop scene, such as Xolile Madinda, who is part of a rap collective called the Fingo Revolutionary Movement (Watkins, 2010: 34). Grahamstown-based hip hop organisers such as Blah ze Blah, Campus Vibes, Fingo Festival and Multimedia Makenik, plan and advertise events at various venues such as bars, clubs and shebeens, open to the public. Most of these organisers draw bigger crowds during the yearly National Arts Festival, by providing open mic events in the evenings.

This thesis assumes a feminist theoretical approach, which is necessary to understand women’s positions within the hip hop scene. Feminism is not a single conceptual theory but consists of several strands, each dealing with different types of oppression (Walker, 1991). Historically, black women have felt that mainstream feminism falls short and undermines their lived experiences (Lorde, 2007: 118). White feminism has historically prioritised sexism over racism – something that does not relate to black women’s lived experience (hooks, 1984:52). Therefore, an in-depth look at black feminist literature is essential in understanding women’s role in hip hop. Black feminism is essential because there is, inarguably, an interplay between race and gender that creates a specific kind of politics (Margaziner, 2011: 48). This is because the dichotomies of gender, race and class are not complete binaries, but are fluid intersectionalities. This feminist framework acknowledges that different forms of power and oppression are interrelated as different intersectionalities interact to produce inequalities between groups of women (Collins, 1999). Intersectionality is premised on the idea that “people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structures of power. People are members of more than one community at the same time, and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege” (Symington, 2004: 2).

Ratele (2011: 266) argues that the issue of monosexual politics is problematic because the experiences of black women cannot be adequately addressed in a discursive and symbolic environment that holds issues of gender as secondary. There is a constant struggle we face in attempting to integrate discourses of race, gender, sexual orientation and class oppression. Collins (2002) argues that social theories, like feminism, should reflect women’s lived experiences with intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation

and gender. Black feminism in hip-hop needs to adequately address women's issues. A hierarchy of oppression should not exist (Lorde, 2009:219). hooks (1984:14) argues that black feminism as a conceptual framework should be used to criticise dominant narratives that are hegemonic, racist, classist and sexist as well as creating a counter-hegemonic discourse.

The study addresses the nature of the hip hop scene in Grahamstown, as well as the subjectivities of female rappers through black feminism as a theoretical framework. This research will also unpack hip hop feminist literature in order to understand to what extent this framework has contributed to academic understandings of hip hop and the broader socio-political and economic issues attached. Hip hop feminism emerged in third wave feminism, and is grounded in the same theoretical foundations as black feminism. Although not the main focus, it will also serve as a brief critique against the misogyny in mainstream hip hop music, and looks at whether it is inherent in rap music, popular music in general and its ties to larger structural conditions. This thesis will not look at controversial artists such as Die Antwoord and their appropriation of blackness.

Hip hop provides a platform for women to create feminist ideas, whether or not they actively name it as such (Phillips et al, 2005: 260). It provides platforms to speak about experiences not often articulated in mainstream hip hop, by allowing artists to have access to self-representation (Haupt, 2008: 202). Godessa has spoken about the misogyny they have experienced as a female rap group, while at the same time offering an alternative perspective to challenge the idea of hip hop in South Africa (Loots, 2003: 70). Conscious hip hop allows for the black youth to make sense of their realities, but also to create a public platform within their communities to articulate their realities of gender violence and gender identity, amongst other issues (Haupt, 2004: 88).

1.3. Goals of the Research

The research is a critical investigation into the nature of hip hop in Grahamstown. The primary objective of the research is to examine the hip hop scene in Grahamstown and to assess whether or not it provides a platform for women to talk about their experiences, and to what extent.

The secondary goals:

- a) to examine the discourse in relation to people's self-construction of black and gendered identity.
- b) to examine the (in)visibility of female rappers
- c) to examine how female emcees are viewed by their male counterparts

It is necessary to understand the nature of black feminism, hip hop feminism and intersectionality within hip hop and how the discourse has affected the politics and conceptualisation of women's hip hop identity. The research will aid in understanding whether ideas of intersectionality are fully possible within the hip hop/rap scene or whether other various struggles will be overshadowed by race.

1.4. Methods, procedures and techniques to be followed

This research sought to explore the nature of the hip hop scene in the local Grahamstown community through the artists involved. The focus was on black youth in the Grahamstown community, including Rhodes University students who were not necessarily from Grahamstown, but had immersed themselves in the local hip hop scene. As this research was primarily focused on women's experiences, they were the primary target sample. However, male rappers' conceptualisations of black female rappers was another objective of this research.

The framework of choice was therefore the qualitative paradigm, using the interpretive research paradigm. Terre Blanche et al (1991:123) define the interpretive research framework as "methods that try to describe and interpret people's feelings and experiences through human terms rather than through quantification and measurement". The intended target respondents were the local black youth (aged 18-24) in an aim to find out their general ideas about inclusivity, identity, black feminism within hip-hop, and general ideas of intersectionality within the scene. This was primarily because hip hop is culture that emerged amongst the youth, and is a popular art form among young people.

The method of use consisted of eight in-depth interviews. The interviews included black youth across gender, class and other intersectionalities in order to gain an understanding of their own conceptualisations and areas of tension. This was to understand how they self-identified, how they constructed their own identities and if they had found black feminism

and intersectionality essential to discourses in hip hop. The interviews were semi-structured and informal, to ensure that people felt comfortable enough to speak their minds. There were a few closed questions, and more open-ended questions to gain as much useful information as possible.

This research used purposive sampling. Palys (2008: 697) states that this method is used by qualitative researchers who are interested in why particular people or groups feel certain ways. It was important for this research that people involved in the hip-hop scene in Grahamstown be interviewed. A distinction was made between local women in hip-hop, Rhodes University students in the local hip-hop scene, and specialist informants who were not the focus of the study, but could offer insights. It was key to ask open-ended questions and avoid leading the participants (Seidman, 1991).

A recorder was used along with detailed notes, and all interviews were conducted in English. A large part of the local community speaks isiXhosa as a main language, and therefore a few participants articulated their art through their home language. Therefore, interviews were conducted with a fluent Xhosa speaker, coupled with the researcher's own conversational linguistic capacity, to incorporate any nuances the researcher would have otherwise missed.

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethics protocol of Rhodes University, and was submitted to the Department of Sociology Ethics Committee for approval. All participants were asked to fill out a form declaring that they had volunteered to participate in this research. This also meant ensuring that their identities remained private, unless they chose to be named.

1.5. Chapter Organisation

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, discusses the history of hip hop in the United States, the history of hip hop in South Africa. It also explores women's involvement in hip hop and why discourse such as black feminism and intersectionality are important in hip hop. It also looks at the various literature on hip hop feminism, which is based on the theoretical underpinnings of black feminism but delves deeper into women's reflections and criticisms of hip hop culture. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology used. It includes the research aims and objectives of this study, it documents the process of data collection and the type of data analysis used to make sense of the findings. This also includes the process of rigour and methods to ascertain trustworthiness. Lastly, it also mentions the trustworthiness

of the research. Chapter 4 presents the research findings and the various themes that arose in the data collection process by providing a thematic data analysis. Chapter 5 serves as the conclusion. It provides a final summary of the findings, followed by limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Hip Hop as a Cultural Movement

Hip hop as a culture and a genre, emerged in the 1970s in the United States (Alridge and Stewart, 2005; Keyes, 2002; Kitwana, 2008). It emerged as a result of socio-political unrest in Jamaica and in the Bronx and therefore emerged not only among the African-American population, but included people from the Caribbean (Dyson, 2004). It is considered an African-American cultural phenomenon that emerged under specific social conditions in the late 1970s to the early 1980s (Forman, 2009: 2). In its earliest phase, hip hop culture was unambiguously tied to street culture; with an emphasis on “the streets” as an authentic culture zone (Forman, 2009: 3). Later, the diversification of hip hop imagery resulted in various expressions. Hip hop culture comprises four core elements: emceeing (MCing), deejaying (DJing), breakdancing (b-boying) and graffiti (Forman, 2009; Pough, 2007; Watkins, 2010). Break-dancers (B-boys) emerged from DJ Kool Herc’s beats and were popularised by Afrika Bambaataa’s Zulu Nation (Ogg, 1999: 15). Graffiti or ‘guerrilla art’ gained prominence in the 1970s, especially in urban trains and subways, and on tenement walls (Ogg, 1999: 19).

This thesis looks at the verbal element of hip hop culture, emceeing, as this is the category rappers or emcees fall under. The terms ‘rapper’ and ‘emcee’ will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis. Emceeing is the most visible hip hop art form in Grahamstown, which is why it is the focus. Rap is the verbal component of hip hop, through which a new worldview is communicated, one that reflects personal and social perspectives (Forman, 2009; Kitwana, 2008). The process of rapping is a vocal performance, where the rapper “uses spoken or semispoken declamations, usually in rhyming couplets” (Ramsey, 2003: 165). Rap and hip hop are inextricably linked to race, cultural politics and ideology (Forman, 2009: 2) as they reflect socio-economic, political and cultural realities that people experience (Alridge and Stewart, 2005: 190). Hip hop culture has been used to illustrate the lived experiences of black youth (Clay, 2003; Watkins, 1998). Lipsitz (1994: 36) also states that hip hop “brings a community into being through performance, and it maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair”. Rap can essentially be seen as rebel music created by those deemed outsiders in society (Fernando, 1995). Hip hop is therefore an important tool to articulate one’s lived experience.

Rap emerged from the ghettos, characterised by immense poverty, violence and crime (Fernando, 1995). As a result, the music genre responds directly to these conditions, but has

also evolved to reflect a multitude of lifestyles and opinions. Under the Reagan administration, black youth suffered under supposed trickle-down economics which exacerbated racial segregation, white families moved to the suburbs resulting in an underclass of people of colour living in inner city poverty and unemployment (Chang, 2005: 223). The Los Angeles Police Department “was one of the most openly racist police departments in the nation, with an unmatched record of beatings, shootings, overzealous raids, and harassment” (Potter, 1995: 49).

The foundations of hip hop were solidified through deejaying, but have since been overshadowed by emceeing as a more prominent form of hip hop (Forman, 2002: 78; Ogg, 1999: 9). DJ Kool Herc, who emigrated from Jamaica and Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash from the USA were influential in the creation of hip hop in the South Bronx (Fernando, 1995; Forman, 2002; Ogg, 1999). Chang (2005: 90) describes the three as the “trinity of hip hop music”. These DJs created the music genre by mixing various beats and creating new styles. Hip hop emerged amongst African-American, Afro-Caribbean and Latin American youth (Ramsey, 2003: 193). Hip hop’s hybridity reflected the character of the USA’s inner cities resulting from immigration, demographic change, as well as the use of new of technology in creating rap music (Kelley, 1997). Rappers have continued to reinvent the musical form through various techniques such as multitracking, mixing and remixing samples (Perkins, 1999: 7).

There is a debate as to whether the influence of Jamaican music in hip hop is overstated, due to the simultaneous developments of music in Kingston, Jamaica and hip hop in the Bronx (Ogg, 1999). However, it is widely acknowledged that rap is influenced by various forms of music that predated it, namely funk, jazz, rhythm and blues (Potter, 2003: 26) and reggae (Fernando, 1995: 32).

According to DJ Kool Herc, hip hop is not only about having fun, but about taking responsibility and speaking truth to power to the masses from the platform it has created and provided (DJ Kool Herc cited in Chang, 2005: xiii).

2.1.1. Gangsta Rap

Hip hop music consists of various other sub-genres, namely gangsta rap, commercial/mainstream hip hop, and conscious hip hop. Gangsta rap emerged in the late 1980 in the West Coast of America (Kolawole, 1996). This hip hop genre is typically linked to criminal activity and notoriety, but can still be considered as an art form expressive of people's lived realities as urban under-classes living in "the hood" (Forman, 2009: 4). As Fernando (1995: 85) asks: "Can anyone really deny that drugs, prostitution, and violence are all a part of the inner-city experience?" According to Kelley (1996), black youth turned criminals are a creation of major economic restructuring and high unemployment. Gangsta rap acknowledges and rationalises this reality (Kelley, 1996: 118). Gangsta rap emerged during the militarisation of black communities such as Compton and Watts, particularly during the war on drugs, and this has resulted in the theme of police repression as a central agenda in the hip hop genre (Kelley, 1996: 131).

Gangsta rap group N.W.A. (Niggaz with Attitudes) has provided social commentary that reflects the brutality of violence, racism and oppression in America (Dyson, 2007: 65). NWA's *Straight Outta Compton* released in 1988 told the explicit realities of black people living in Compton, a city terrorised by gang crime (Fernando, 1995: 95).

NWA's Fuck the Police:

Fuck the police, comin' straight from the underground
A young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown
And not the other colour, so police think
They have the authority to kill a minority

According to Rose (1996: 240-241), rap is targeted and attacked because of this kind of ideological standpoint, and the criticisms stem from discourses that deem black culture as a threat to American culture. Kolawole (1996: 8) argues that this genre has retained stereotypes from 1970s Blaxploitation movies by reinforcing images of men "as gun-toting misogynists who reinforce the sexual myths and associations of criminality". Rap culture cannot be decontextualized from larger social constructions of black culture discourse that portray it as an internal threat to dominant American culture and society. Rap's profound capacity to articulate "the young black urban critical voice of social protest, has a profound potential as a basis for a language of liberation" (Rose, 1996: 253). However, debates surrounding gangsta

rap are mainly centred on its sexism. As a result, it can be argued that the “emancipatory potential” of gangsta rap is lost in this message (Back 1996: 207). This is echoed by Kolawole (1996: 9), who notes that despite the political nature of gangsta rap, its main focus is on the nihilism felt by black people and fails to go beyond that. Contestation over the meaning and significance of rap music, including its ability to occupy public space, is a central aspect of black cultural politics (Rose, 1996: 253).

2.1.2. Conscious Hip Hop

Meanwhile, conscious hip hop is associated with pro-black or black consciousness movements such as the Black Power movement (Chang, 2003), in South Africa it can be linked to anti-apartheid protest (Haupt, 2009). It is considered more political in nature as it deals with social concerns and ills (Forman, 2009). Poets such as the Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron laid the groundwork for the political rappers of the 1980s and 1990s through their message-oriented texts. Conscious hip hop is characterised by political and social commentary, which does not shy away from self-critique and criticism (Perkins, 1996: 4).

Rap group Run-DMC is widely considered the epitome of rap’s integration of social commentary, landing critical commercial success (Dyson, 2007: 62). Conscious hip hop is music that is socially aware and “consciously connected to historic patterns of political protest and aligned with progressive forces of social critique” (Dyson, 2007: 64). In addition, apart from a few conscious rappers, the subgenre is not mainstream (Chang, 2003: 17). Haupt (2008) argues that conscious hip hop can be used as a platform to critically engage with and challenge misogyny not only in gangsta rap, but in mainstream popular culture as well. Conscious hip hop artists of the 1980s include KRS-One, Afrika Bambaataa, Public Enemy and Queen Latifah, who according to Rose (1994) affirmed black subjectivity through their music.

Afrika Bambaataa added a fifth element to hip hop culture: “knowledge”. He explains that the Zulu Nation is about having the “right knowledge, right wisdom, right ‘overstanding’ and right sound reasoning, meaning that we want our people to deal with factuality versus beliefs, factology versus beliefs” (Chang, 2005: 90).

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five’s “The Message” highlighted the plight of poor African Americans in a seemingly hopeless situation (Fernando, 1995: 19; Forman, 2002: 88). It communicated a specific social perspective – that of the urban minority living in a

society of social disparities (Forman, 2002: 89). While the previous generation focused on civil rights and Black Power activism, Kitwana's (2002) generation of youth focus on a wider range of issues, including but not limited to, racial profiling, elections, environmental justice, globalisation and issues affecting the youth. The cultural politics of rap "lie in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception" (Rose, 1996: 236). The politics of rap music involves contestation over public space, meanings, interpretations and value of lyrics and music, and the investment of cultural capital (Rose, 1996). Rap music represents communication, instruction and expression at its core (Fernando, 1995). Hip hop feminism as a discourse has been particularly significant and effective in this genre, and can be seen by the presence of rappers such as Queen Latifah, Lauryn Hill, and Salt-N-Pepa (Loots, 2003).

2.2. Hip Hop in South Africa and Black Consciousness

Hip hop crosses race, gender and social class boundaries, and has increasingly become transnational as a global art form capable of mobilising diverse disenfranchised groups (Potter, 1995: 10). The 1980s saw South Africa experience a rise in hip hop culture, particularly in the Western Cape and among young coloured people (Becker and Dastile, 2008: 22; Künzler, 2011: 28). Cape Town is considered the birthplace of hip hop in South Africa (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006). It developed as a form of resistance to apartheid as rappers began to narrate their lived experiences as oppressed people (Khan, 2010: 150). Apartheid was a racist system of law and ideology that allowed white minority rule over a black majority (Chang, 2005: 215). After the end of British colonialism, South Africa faced an internal form of neo-colonialism from the late 1940s to mid-1990s. The government, under white minority rule, implemented various legislations and policies of racial segregation that controlled people's movement (including who they could marry, where they could live, and where they could work) (Lucas, 2014: 3). Hip hop was predominant in coloured working-class communities in Cape Town (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006: 263). Breakdancing, MCing, beatboxing and the art of graffiti were more popular than DJing and music production as it required additional expenses that were not readily available (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006: 264).

The hip hop scene reflected issues of socio-economic and political oppression similar to American hip hop (Khan, 2010: 153). Protests and boycotts became more violent in the 1980s as the political situation became volatile; expressions of anger were articulated through

graffiti, breakdancing and rap (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006: 265). This anger connected young people across the globe who felt similar disenfranchisement. However, there was a progression from imitation of African-American role models to localising rap to reflect the conditions characterised by apartheid (Künzler, 2011: 28). This change is evident in the use of local South African languages in hip hop. Artists and groups such as Prophets of da City, Black Noise and Godessa (despite having been formed later than the other two) “played a similar role in validating negated black and ‘coloured’ identities in South Africa during the same period” (Haupt, 2008: 144). According to the former member of POC, “hip hop is about seeing the *something* in what we are often told is nothing” (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006: 262). They describe hip hop as the resilience of the human spirit which transforms oneself and the surrounding environment (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006: 262).

The first South African rap album was released in 1990 by POC, and despite its success, the group faced broadcast censorship for the political nature of their music (Künzler, 2011: 28). Rap groups POC, Black Noise and Brasse Vannie Kaap (BVK) spearheaded anti-apartheid resistance and, along with other rappers, were committed to ideals of Black Consciousness, which were seen as essential to the base of the resistance movement against the apartheid regime (Haupt, 2008; Künzler, 2011: 29). By the mid-1970s, the South African black youth had reshaped the Black Consciousness movement with militant protests (Chang, 2005: 217). Black Conscious thought is seen as an attempt to empower people by educating them about their history, and was especially relevant at that moment in time, as a direct response to the oppression felt. Its use in hip hop music reflected “a space of critical contestation of hegemonic racial discourses in South Africa” (Marco, 2011: 99). However, it can be argued that this counter hegemonic discourse employed by early rappers has lost much of its hegemony in so-called post-apartheid South Africa, as representations of identity have become much more varied (Künzler, 2011).

The philosophy of black consciousness is grounded in “ontological, epistemological, ethical, moral, social [and] political” traditions through lived experiences, and consists of a combination of culture, politics and philosophy (More, 2004: 80). This political thought was meant to tackle real and existential struggles shaping black existence (Gordon, 2006; More, 2004: 83). The lived experience of social beings is significant because it allows for intellectual production, as well as validating literature previously ignored throughout history. Steve Biko’s notion of Black Consciousness is a philosophy based on the lived experiences of

historically dominated people (Gordon, 2006: 30). Black Consciousness is a call towards identity, self-love and cultural assertion (Gibson, 2004: 8). What Biko stressed most of all, was the relationship between black self-awareness and liberation (Gibson, 2004: 8). He emphasized that: “what Black Consciousness seeks to do is to produce at the output end of the process real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society” (Biko, 1978: 52). Ideals of Black Consciousness thought are still evident in conscious hip hop today.

However, a major critique of Black Consciousness is that it rests on the notion that race is the primary and sole oppression for dominated peoples in South Africa (Gqola, 2001:134-136). This implies that the movement did not acknowledge that people experience different oppressions within society. Certainly, it cannot be denied that the main focus of Black Consciousness is race.

Various rappers such as Hip Hop Pantsula (HHP), Zubz, Emile YX, EJ von Lyrik, Proverb, Pro Kid and Molemi, who grew up towards the end of apartheid and became rappers in the early 2000s, also notably include the ideals of Black Consciousness in their music (Haupt, 2009; Künzler, 2011: 30).

The use of *Gamtaal*, and *spaza* rhymes (a mix of Afrikaans, Xhosa, Arabic, and little English) (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006: 266) indicates the reclamation of hip hop by South Africans to express themselves in the way they choose. Also significant is the increased use of indigenous languages such as Setswana, isiZulu, Sesotho and slang, such as Tsotsitaal (Marco, 2011). According to Becker and Dastile (2008), the use of local languages expressed a new feeling of self-assurance for post-apartheid society rappers. Hip hop artist Zuluboy raps in his home language of isiZulu and has used rap to raise issues of disenfranchised and marginalised black youth (Mhlambi, 2014). This can also be seen in this rise of *motswako*, a Setswana hip hop genre. Popular hip hop artists HHP (a pioneer of the genre), Khuli Chana, Cassper Nyovest and Fifi Cooper are considered motwako rappers (Ditsele, 2017: 5).

Despite its lack of mainstream appeal, conscious hip hop remains significant as underground music, enjoyed in marginalised spaces like townships, particularly in Cape Town (Haupt, 2008), particularly because the socio-economic and political conditions for the marginalised have remained the same after 1994. However, Chang (2006) maintains that even mainstream hip hop has and continues to give artists a voice.

2.2.1. Hip Hop in Grahamstown

The beginning of hip hop in the Eastern Cape also began as a response to oppression under the apartheid regime, and after 1994, continued to talk about people's conditions and raise consciousness (Watkins, 2010). This is particularly true for the Fingo Revolutionary Movement (FRM), which is considered to be one of the first hip hop groups in Grahamstown (Watkins, 2010: 34). "FRM is concerned with organising young people and making them responsible for the welfare of the community. They train novices who are further required to become independent and spread the messages in hip hop" (Watkins, 2010:35). Xolile Madinda, founder of the group, is still active in the local hip hop scene. Madinda, rap name X-Nasty, is considered "the father of hip hop in Grahamstown" spreading the word of Black Consciousness and invoking revolutionaries such as Steve Biko and Chris Hani (Schoon, 2016). He continues hosting events such as the Fingo Festival and AroundHipHop which give young black rappers in the township a platform to perform. The Fingo Festival, which takes place in the township, was established in 2011 as a direct response to the lack of geographical diversity of the National Arts Festival. As most events take place in Grahamstown West, local artists felt that the small township presence did not offer a platform for them (Schoon, 2016). The Fingo Festival "offers a week-long programme combining local hip-hop acts, National Arts Festival shows and in-depth community discussions" (Schoon, 2016: 1). Aroundhiphop is an arts platform which helps artists with creating street art, rap projects, films and events in the effort to increase people's self-awareness and informed by Madinda's political consciousness and activism (Aroundhiphop, 2017). Therefore, the message of Black Consciousness remains central, particularly for rappers in the township. However, other genres of hip hop can be heard throughout the town, much like mainstream hip hop music in the local clubs.

As Grahamstown is a university town, many of those involved in the hip hop scene come from Rhodes University. This has led to many student-turned-rappers occupying primetime spots in the best clubs in town. This is evident through the numerous Facebook groups and events centred around hip hop. Grahamstown-based hip hop organisers active on social media include Blah ze Blah, Campus Vibes and Multimedia Makenik.

Oziris, founder of Blah ze Blah, helps manage a few local conscious hip hop artists and organises various events ranging from cyphers, open mic sessions, mini-concerts in town.

The open mic platforms run throughout the year, but are popular during the National Arts Festival as an informal platform for hip hop artists and poets to express themselves.

Multimedia Makenik is a Facebook page filled with links to online music from rappers in the township. Campus Vibes is a Rhodes University initiative established by Pablo, who in 2015, noticed the lack of a cohesive hip hop space for young rappers at Rhodes University. The annual and popular 'Watch The Throne' event, organised by Campus Vibes, brings rappers not only from the University, but also from the wider Grahamstown community, not only to compete to win a grand cash prize, but also to perform for large crowds. Organisers book various venues such as bars, clubs and taverns open to the public. Much of the information on the hip hop scene in Grahamstown can be found online through informal Facebook pages and posts, as there are no formal platforms or websites. In addition, the student-based university radio station, Rhodes Music Radio (RMR) occasionally plays local tracks. The community based radio station, Radio Grahamstown does the same, playing local artists every Friday from 6pm-9pm.

2.3. Women in Rap

According to Guevara (1996: 60), the political significance of hip hop is made more meaningful by the presence and active participation of the women of the hip hop movement. Music has the capacity to act as both a site for oppression and as a site for empowerment (Hollows, 2000). It can simultaneously be used as a form of escapism or as a tool to discuss social ills, thereby helping black youth make sense of their identities (Weekes, 2004). Hip hop has been male-dominated since its inception, and as a result, speaks to a male audience through a masculine discourse (hooks, 1994; Weekes, 2004). Despite this, women have been a part of the hip hop scene since the 1980s. Sha Rock (of Funky Four Plus One), Sparky D, Sweet Tee and Jazzy Jones were pioneers of female rap, and paved the way for the better known Roxanne Shanté, the Real Roxanne, MC Lyte, Antoinette, Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah and Yo-Yo, who further identified themselves as strong, able women (Fernando, 1995: 271). However, artists like MC Lyte and Queen Latifah have had to work harder than their male counterparts to reach the same levels of success (Nelson, 1993: 77). Queen Latifah was extremely prominent in the 1980s, and to many, she embodied the emergence of female rap music (Woldu, 2006: 96). Rappers like MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, Salt-N-Pepa, and YoYo emphasised women empowerment and solidarity against oppression by men (Forman, 2002: 299). By the late 1990s, rappers such as Da Brat, Eve, Lauryn Hill, Lil' Kim, Missy Elliott

and Rah Digga “were redefining gender relations and expressing themes of female confidence and desire, often within highly sexualised contexts” (Forman, 2002: 299).

According to Smith (1998:114), there were two distinct personas that emerged: Queen Latifah’s “Who You Calling a Bitch?” and Foxy Brown’s “I’m that bitch” persona; both these rap identities were useful for female emcees using them to meaningful statements about their social observations. That being said, the first persona is considered more feminist and the latter not so much. However, Keyes (2000) expands this to include two more personas. These will be discussed in detail below.

Missy “Misdemeanour” Elliott not only gained prominence as a rapper, but also took to taking control of her music by becoming a producer (Ogg, 1999: 186).

“If I could get my foot in the door, I wanted to write songs for different artists, I wanted to produce records, I wanted to have my own label, I wanted to get artists and sign them to my label. So far I’ve accomplished all those things and there’s still some more to go but those were my main goals. I think I made other female rappers or singers say: “Hey, if she’s doing it, maybe we could try.”” (Missy Elliott quoted in Ogg, 1999: 186).

Missy Elliot represents a group of women who have pushed to take ownership of their music.

Yo-Yo released her debut album in 1991 “Make Way for the Motherlode” which was successful. She released a further two albums. All three of her albums embraced the “ideology of the independent, confident, self-respecting, and strong yet feminine black woman that Yo-Yo epitomises” (Fernando, 1995: 272). She also helped form the Intelligent Black Women’s Coalition (IBWC), a support group that organised meetings and benefit concerts.

Yoyo:

“We had said that we would get a coalition started with women to really just confide in Yo-Yo. You know, Yo-Yo don’t take no shit, this is the type of woman Yo-Yo is, she ain’t gonna let a man hit her. You know, just that self-esteem – encouraging her.”

(Yo-Yo quoted in Fernando, 1995: 272-274).

Emerging in the early 2000s, all-female rap group Godessa was one of the first female hip-hop groups in South Africa and was influential in establishing hip-hop culture in locally

(Clark & Koster, 2014: 165). The trio consisted of Shameema Williams, Bernadette “Burni” Amansure and Eloise “EJ von Lyrik” Jones (Herimbi, 2016). Godessa engaged with gender politics through their political lyrics, and in addition, member EJ von Lyrik broke into producing in a largely male dominated sector, further illustrating the dedication towards representation (Haupt, 2008: 179). The absence of women is evident not only in rap, but in music production (Künzler, 2011:38).

When asked if they felt burdened as the voices of female hip hop at the time, the group said “It was an honour to speak on behalf of other women, hoping we’re representing our issues well enough. As a spokesperson for the broader community, it was sometimes a burden” (Godessa cited in Herimba, 2016). Shameena (cited in Herimba, 2016) mentions that in the debut stage, people did not know how to respond to the female rap group. Social Ills is a song which propelled Godessa into the limelight. The song explores the materialism projected by media and commercialism which negatively affects society. The last verse of the song strongly reflects this notion:

[Verse: EJ]

Deviation from the norm

Is similar navigation in the storm

This mainstream slave ship is sailing and before long

You will mourn when your individuality is gone

So caught up in material bullshit

That the thought of being real seems putrid

Whatever else you hear seems to be muted or strange

Coz imitations the epitome’ of fear for change¹

The music industry places many restrictions on women, particularly on their looks – although there are exceptions to this, women in music use their beauty or sex appeal as a major selling point (Kolawole, 1996: 11). According to hooks (1994), in order for women to truly celebrate their sexuality, it has to be within a context that allows for the female gaze, in other words, where women are the spectators. However, men remain the dominant spectators of these sexualised images. According to Weekes (2004: 147), although young women may embrace

¹ See Appendix D for complete lyrics

their sexuality “the lyrical celebration of female sexuality within the music they consume may still be construed through a male gaze”. Due to this, the relationship between equality and respect in popular media is complicated – particularly for female rappers (Woldu, 2006: 97). There exists a politics of respectability that promotes ideas of honour and self-respect as ways to uplift black women rights to gain access to the public (Higginbotham, 1993: 185).

Young women’s two-fold struggle with both media images and within hip hop itself, represents the movement’s most fundamental challenge: “Just as hip hop poses a menace to dominant white bourgeois culture, women’s participation in its supposedly masculine rituals threatens still another haven of male hegemony” (Guevara, 1996: 61). Black women are integral in popular music as they create and maintain a dialogue not only with their fans, but with other male rappers through which they talk about various issues, fears and pleasures by addressing questions of sexual power, the lack of economic opportunities, racism and sexism, expressions of freedom, everyday anxieties and much more (Rose, 2004: 294).

While some literature argues that women are late to the hip hop scene, other literature (Morgan (1999), Pough (2007), Rose (1994)), implies that women have been involved since its conception but have been erased from history and their contributions made invisible.

Female rapper, Ms. Melodie thinks this way, saying:

“It wasn’t that the male started rap, the male was just the first to be put on wax. Females were always into rap, and females always had their little crews and were always known for rockin’ house parties and streets or whatever, school yards, the corner, the park, whatever it is” (quoted in Rose, 2004: 294).

Rose (2004) illustrates how women’s lyrics challenge dominant narratives on sexuality, heterosexual relationships, and women’s bodies. Through lyrics, as well as music videos, women like Queen Latifah, MC Lyte and Salt-N-Pepa have opened up a platform for women to exercise their sexual freedom and independence in hip hop music.

For the most part, “women rappers promote self-reliance and challenge the depictions of women in male raps, addressing the fears about male dishonesty and infidelity that most women share” (Rose, 2004: 296). Rose breaks it down further by providing three categories of women’s rap about heterosexual relationships: first, raps that challenge men’s sexual dominance over women; secondly, raps challenge men as sole bearers of hip hop; thirdly,

raps that explicitly discuss and celebrate women's physical and sexual power, and women's identity (Rose, 2004: 296).

Queen Latifah and Monie Love's "Ladies First" is a song about black female unity and independence, while showing the diversity of black women and the significance of black female political activists (Potter, 1995: 92; Rose, 2004). Monie Love explains the impact of this hip hop single, as a range of girls (from the age of 9) and women (her mother's age), and aspiring MCs said to her:

"I really feel like I can do this now. I really feel ready to contribute to hip hop. I'm not scared anymore. You've helped to clear up any misunderstandings that I had about women in the rap industry and the hip hop community"

(Monie Love quoted in Ogg, 1999: 108).

2.3.1. Black Women's Rap Identities and Sexualities

According to Keyes (2000: 255), women in rap "have created spaces from which to deliver powerful messages from Black female and Black feminist perspectives" by challenging the male-dominated space with powerful lyricism. She explores four distinct categories of rap identities that female emcees navigate between: the "Queen Mother", "Fly Girl", "Sista with Attitude" and "Lesbian" (Keyes, 2000). Female rappers can belong to more than one simultaneously. and in doing so can create responses to the ambiguous positioning of women in music (Weekes, 2004).

i) Queen Mother

This category refers to female emcees who see themselves as Afrocentric beings, often evident by their African-inspired style of dress; and in their lyrics where they use phrases such as "Nubian Queen" or "sistas droppin' science to the people" in reference to themselves and their intellect (Keyes, 2000: 256). Examples include Queen Latifah, Sister Souljah and YoYo. The "Queen Mother" is portrayed as maternal, regardless of age.

ii) Fly Girl

This category comprises chic and fashionable women who are portrayed as fun, outgoing, desirable and independent (Keyes, 2000: 260). Salt-N-Pepa still played on their sexuality while simultaneously projecting the image of female independence (Kolawole, 1996: 12). This group of women are erotic subjects, rather than objects. Both Lorde (1984) and hooks

(1994) argue that there is power in black women embracing their erotic knowledge and this can contribute positively to issues of self-esteem.

Other examples include Salt-N-Pepa, Left Eye (of TLC), Missy Elliott, and YoYo.

iii) Sista with Attitude

Female emcees who embrace (aggressive) attitudes as empowerment comprise this category. By reclaiming the term “bitch” as a positive appellation or a term of endearment, a space for empowerment and sisterhood can begin to exist (Potter, 92). YoYo, a protégé of Ice Cube, has labelled herself as a ‘gangsta bitch’ (Kolawole, 1996: 12). Missy Elliott’s reclamation of the term “bitch” also puts her in this category, alongside female emcees Lil’ Kim and Foxy Brown who have projected the “bad girl” character in their music (Keyes, 2000: 263). South African rapper, Nadia Nakai has also embraced this category. Potter (1995: 93-94) argues that hardcore/gangsta female rappers fit within two categories: the “sex school”, which emphasises women’s empowerment by taking charge of their sexuality, and has encouraged heterosexual assertiveness for women; and the “gangsta school”, emphasise a no-nonsense, hardcore gangsta style. Hardcore personalities like Nikki D, Rage and Hurricane Gloria appealed to this latter category, and appealed to the “strictly street” audience alongside their male counterparts (Fernando, 1995). Nikki D’s music ranges from explicit sexual lyrics (Who Freaked Who) to a first-hand account of teen pregnancy (Daddy’s Little Girl) (Rose, 2004). In doing so, she mirrors real attitudes and situations about the community she comes from.

The way hip hop re-appropriated the term “nigga” is similar to the way women have attempted to reclaim the term “bitch” (Potter, 1995: 93). Missy Elliott’s second album included a single titled “She’s A Bitch”, the rapper argues that she does not use the term in a negative way, but rather, if she has to be a bitch to get what she wants and achieve bigger success then she is not opposed to it (Ogg, 1999: 187). However, others have argued that this reclamation has not been completely successful because the “bitch” discourse has been curtailed by dominant negative narratives in male rap (Weekes, 2004: 147). On one hand, there exists a discourse that is liberating and empowering, but on the other, there is a discourse that continues to degrade black women as those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Potter, 1995: 92).

iv) Lesbian

This category is still fairly new, and this is to do with the lack of black female emcees willing to be explicit about their homosexuality in a space dominated with homophobia (Dyson cited in Keyes, 2000). This is in juxtaposition to other white lesbians in popular media, who are not met with the same persecution (Duvernay, 1998).

According to Rose (2004: 295), women in rap are divided into two groups: the first is “the kind to take home to mother” and denotes a woman who is loyal and trustworthy; the second is “the kind you meet at 3 o’ clock in the morning” which represents a manipulative woman who only wants monetary exchanges for sex. She implies that young black men are fearful of women’s sexual prowess, and this could explain men’s desire to exercise their dominance over women (Rose, 2004). Kitwana (2002: 104) suggests that Lil’ Kim and Foxy Brown have constructed their identities around the materialistic relationship between women and men, willing to trade sex for monetary goods.

According to Morgan (2004), for discourse on contemporary black female identity to remain rich and insightful, the choices should not lie in choosing Latifah over Lil’ Kim, or even Foxy Brown over Salt-N-Pepa, rather, “They lie at the magical intersection where those contrary voices meet – the juncture where “truth” is no longer black and white but subtle, intriguing shades of grey” (Morgan, 2004: 281). In this case, dichotomies are not useful as they cannot explain the complexities of black female identity, which needs to be analysed in its entirety, with all its nuances.

2.4. Black Feminism, Hip Hop Feminism and Intersectionality

2.4.1. Overview of Feminism

There exists no single conceptual framework of feminism. According to Brah & Phoenix (2004:76), “one critical thematic of feminism that is perennially relevant is the important question of what it means to be a woman under different historical circumstances”. However, Vron Ware (2015:229) argues that the first wave of feminism was less concerned with issues of race and racism, thereby excluding or limiting the participation of black women. She argues that there is a need to engage with the historical memory of feminism in order to understand the development of contemporary forms of oppression. The ways in which colonialism has been recycled and reconstructed today should be interrogated (Ware, 2015: 229). White feminism has led to rhetoric such as the white saviour narrative in the framing of

black women as unable to realise their own oppression from black men, as well as the framing of Muslim women's oppression by their religion and clothing (Ware, 2015: xiii).

According to Schneir (1972: xii), traditional or liberal feminism has its roots in the democratic revolutions of the middle class in the 18th century. The United States was seen as the world centre of this feminism. However, the literature of other oppressed women such as black American and working class women was missing. According to Munson and Saulnier (2014: 18), this exclusionary trend has continued into the 20th century as the needs of poor women and women of colour were largely ignored by white liberal feminists. Rowland and Klein (1996: 18) argue that radical feminism has been criticised for seeing women's oppression as universal and above other intersectionalities such as sexuality, age, physical ability and race. They proclaim a global sisterhood in saying that all women experience oppression because they are women, however they can experience this oppression differently in regard to their culture and class, to name two additional variables (Rowland and Klein, 1996: 19). The focus of Marxist analysis has been class oppression, and by extension women's oppression (which is subordinated as an aspect of class oppression) (Hartmann, 1979: 7). Marxism is a theory about class relations and the accumulation of capital in society, the reproduction of class dominance and class struggles (Hartmann, 1979: 7).

Willis (1984: 95) argues that traditional feminism was overwhelmingly white and middle-class because other women, namely black and working class, could not separate feminist issues from issues that were central to their lives – race and class. There was an emphasis by black women to include racism and imperialism into feminist discourse (Ware, 2015: 228). Ware argues that the disjuncture between white feminism and what people of colour were demanding was because white women may have struggled to understand their privilege whilst facing oppression (Ware, 2015: xi). This is because the dichotomies of gender, race and class are not complete binaries, but are fluid intersectionalities.

Race is a socially and politically constructed category that is not based or distinct in biology (Ware, 2015: xviii; Helms, 1995). Different racial groups experience “different conditions of domination or oppression” (Helms, 1995: 181). Race is socially constructed through political, economic and scientific institutions (Taylor, 1997). There are different constructions of racial identity. According to Smedley and Smedley (2015), race cannot be ignored because it is so deeply embedded into our social structures and cultures. Therefore, the traditional feminist

framework was seen as only applicable to white women, rather white middle class women, and did not apply to the specific experiences of black women (Mangena, 2008: 262).

White feminists have historically prioritised sexism over racism – something that does not relate to black women's lived experience. Loomba (1998) argues that there are colour prejudices within white feminism, and gender-blindness within anti-racist, anti-colonial movements. She points out how western female selfhood has been consolidated on the "othering" of black women (Loomba, 1998:164). Feminism is problematic particularly when concepts are used without their specification in local cultural and historical contexts (Mohanty, 1991: 67).

2.4.2. Black Feminism and Intersectionality

Black feminist conceptual thought was formed in response to this feminism. It needs to be understood that there are issues that affect black women specifically as black women (in terms of race and class). bell hooks (1984) argues that racism should be seen as a feminist issue because they share similar ideological and philosophical foundations. The personal is the political (Clay, 2008; Pough, 2004). bell hooks (1984:14) notes that black women bear the brunt of sexist, racist and classist oppression and have the lowest social status of any other group.

Cleage (1993) defines black feminism as "the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities – intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economic" (cited in Hill Collins, 1997: 12). This feminist framework acknowledges that different forms of power and oppression are interrelated as different intersectionalities interact to produce inequalities between groups of women (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004: 398-401). It therefore undermines the claim that black and white women have similar lived experiences. Intersectionality is premised on the idea that "people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structures of power. People are members of more than one community at the same time, and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege" (Symington, 2004: 2).

According to Hill Collins (1997: 12), feminism is both an ideology and a global political movement that addresses issues of sexism. She defines sexism as "a social relationship in which males as a group have authority over females as a group" (Hill Collins, 1997: 12). A

global feminist agenda must include: the economic status of women and women's global poverty, education, development, environmental racism, employment policies, prostitution, inheritance laws, as well as political rights, women's health and survival and marital issues (Hill Collins, 1997: 12-13).

The significance of the term 'black feminism' lies in its ability to disrupt the racism inherent in the presentation of traditional feminism as an ideology and movement for white women only and disrupts the false universality it puts forward (Hill Collins, 1997: 13). However, Black feminism has been rejected by some women because the term 'feminism' is seen as entirely white. Black feminism attempts to merge concerns of black feminist and black nationalist politics without having to give up one's identity as woman or as black (Hill Collins, 1997: 13). Although not widespread, black feminism has also been criticized for its separatism and exclusion of black men (Hill Collins, 1997: 15).

Hill Collins (2000) argues that social theories should reflect women's lived experiences with intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and gender. Her definition of intersectionality refers to intersecting oppressions that work together in producing injustice, such as the intersection of race and gender (Hill Collins, 2000: 18). According to May (2015: 3), intersectionality is "an analytical and political orientation that brings together a number of insights and practices developed largely in the context of Black feminist and women of colour theoretical and political traditions". Lorde (2009: 219) makes it clear that a hierarchy of oppression should not and cannot exist. hooks (1984: 14) argues that black feminism as a conceptual framework should be used to criticise dominant narratives that are hegemonic, racist, classist and sexist as well as creating a counter-hegemonic discourse. hooks (1984:35) argues that if all forms of oppression are supported by similar institutional and social structures, the eradication of one oppression cannot happen without the dismantling of the rest.

As Lorde (2009: 58) eloquently puts it, "my primary oppressions come as a result of my Blackness as well as my womanness, and therefore my struggles on both these fronts are inseparable". In addition, we have to understand that issues of class, sexuality, able-bodiedness and geography affect us differently. Hill Collins (2002) argues that social theories should reflect women's lived experiences with intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and gender. De la Rey (1997: 7) argues the same, saying: "Being a woman is not distinct from being either black or working class or heterosexual. We cannot

partial out gender from the rest of who we are – for we are simultaneously classed, raced and gendered”. This is further supported by Mohanty (1991: 13), who notes that relations of power cannot be reduced to dichotomies or rather, binary oppositions, but are “fluid structures of domination which intersect to locate women differently at particular historical conjectures, while at the same time insisting on the dynamic oppositional agency of individuals and collectives and their engagement in ‘daily life’”.

Intersectionality has also been described as “the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other systems of discrimination create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women” (Symington, 2004: 2; Tomlinson and Baruch, 2013). In other words, intersectionality refers to intersecting oppressions that work together in producing injustice, such as the intersection of race and gender (Hill Collins, 2002:18). Intersectionality is described by Brah & Phoenix (2004:76) as “signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts”. This means that different aspects of social life cannot be separated into “pure strands”. Therefore, issues of race, gender, age and class are not isolated experiences (Tomlinson and Baruch, 2013). Different intersectionalities contradict and conflict with each other every day. There is also the recognition that individual experiences are unique and result from the coming together of different types of identity (Symington, 2004: 2). Intersectionality offers a means to analyse how systems of power and inequality impact groups of people differently (Tomlinson and Baruch, 2013).

2.4.3. Feminism in South Africa

Under the apartheid regime, the participation of women - especially black women - in various aspects of life efficiently relegated them to second-class citizenship status (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004:396). Therefore, issues of gender cannot be divorced from issues of race (Maart, 2014:115). Hassim (1991) talks of South African women’s attempts to incorporate feminist ideas and issues into mainstream politics, yet parties like the ANC Women’s Youth League continued to use nationalism as central to women’s politics. Furthermore, she argues that “Organisationally, women activists have always been tied to national political and union structures and agendas have been determined by national priorities rather than the priorities of smaller constituencies” (Hassim, 1991: 69). This shows that the broader struggle for liberation did not leave sufficient room for gender issues. Hlope (in Maart, et al, 2014:111)

argues that the feminism that emerged in the 1980s did not only entail fighting in a male-dominated society, but against capitalism as a tool used to advance male domination, discrimination and the marginalisation of women. By showing the link between race, gender, and politics, black feminism should be relevant to hip hop discourses, specifically around the concepts of intersectionality, inclusivity and visibility.

2.4.4. Participation of Men

Feminism is a discourse in which both women and men need to participate equally. hooks (1994) argues that the first waves of feminism did not pay enough attention to men as pro-feminists, and excluded them. The marginalisation of the feminist struggle has made it appear a personal, individual struggle rather than a political movement (hooks, 1984:71). Separatist ideology is detrimental to the feminist movement, as women alone cannot fight against sexism whilst men continue to support and perform sexist oppression (hooks, 1984:81). In Lorde (2007)'s analysis of male privilege, she argues that black men have the capacity to oppress black women. This aspect is of particular significance in understanding tensions between men and women that reproduce themselves in hip hop.

Ratele (2013) explores the liberation of black masculinities through dialogue between pro-feminists and feminists; secondly she looks at the Black Consciousness as a philosophy that places the struggle of black men as a result of historical white racist oppression and the way it does not place enough responsibility on men's complicity in perpetuating hetero-patriarchy. This is supported by hooks (1984: 73), who argues as well that these two realities co-exist, but male oppression of women cannot be excused despite the recognition that they too can suffer from sexism. The sexist actions, beliefs and articulations waged by black men have the capacity to undermine women's struggles against racism. There are tensions between black male and female artists because of the way women are spoken about and their objectification in music videos, particularly. According to Kitwana (2002), many hip hop generation men lack interest in feminism and do not make the effort to understand it. He argues that the objectification of women has increased, and this is related to inheriting the previous generation's sexism, as well as the intense focus on materialism which undermines relationships (Kitwana, 2002).

2.5. Hip Hop Feminism

For feminism to be applicable, it requires theory that is relevant to women who suffer due to racism, sexism, structural poverty and economic exploitation as primary forces of oppression of most women in the world. The third wave also represents the generation of hip hop feminists, because their work is aligned with the black feminist and womanist agendas. Hip hop feminism reiterates concepts of intersectionality and black feminism (Durham et al, 2013; Lindsey, 2015; Morgan, 1999). Women have participated in the culture of hip hop since its inception – this includes breakdancing, deejaying, graffiti artists and emceeing.

Joan Morgan coined the term “hip hop feminist” in 1999 as a discourse dedicated to “keeping it real” through a feminism that “samples and layers many voices, injects sensibilities into the old and flips it into something new, provocative, and powerful” (Morgan, 2012: 418). Durham (2007: 1) defines hip hop feminism as movement that is culturally, intellectually and politically centred “in the situated knowledge of women of colour from the post-civil rights or hip-hop generation who recognise culture as a pivotal site for political intervention to challenge, resist, and mobilise collectives to dismantle systems of exploitation”.

Hip hop feminists are people of all genders committed to speaking out against gender exploitation in the music genre and creating spaces for change (Pough, 2007: 80). Various literature on hip hop feminism delves into the relationship between hip hop and feminism, providing critical discussion on how structural issues in society contribute to rap’s sexism, production and consumption (Pough, 2007: 81). Hip hop feminists must be immersed in the culture of hip hop as a way of life; they are community activists, with justice-centred politics (Lindsey, 2015) such as advocating reproductive justice. They are also concerned with black women’s representations in popular culture and mainstream media (Pough, 2007: 82). Hip hop feminism is also a space for black women to establish and develop gender critiques and feminist identity which, thereafter, can be used to explain the link between rap music and misogyny (Peoples, 2008). Morgan (1999) argues for a hip hop feminist theory that reflects people’s lived experiences and includes all the contradictions of these realities. “For hip hop feminists, excavating and clearly articulating how women and girls shape hip hop situate the culture within a herstory of defiance and resistance” (Lindsey, 2015:54). These stories address specific issues confronting the hip hop generation, but also look at the establishment of women empowerment initiatives within hip hop (Lindsey, 2015). Women can contest male-dominated spaces simply by participating and occupying them as female rappers, as

well as by challenging perceptions of women in rap and engaging with both male and female rappers (Weekes, 2004: 148). Durham et al (2013: 730) assert that “hip hop feminist studies has demonstrated the centrality of hip hop’s aesthetics and epistemologies in the everyday, lived experiences of young women”.

Rose (1994) notes the hesitancy expressed by some female rappers to accept the label ‘feminist’ especially in view of the complex interweaving of race and gender which links them as much to their male counterparts as to other women. Interviews with rappers Queen Latifah, MC Lyte have documented this rejection. This could be said to be another instance where women participate in “feminist acts” but refuse to label themselves accordingly. However, Sharpley-Whiting (2007: 155) is hesitant to use the term “hip hop feminism” because she sees it as a “continued critical dialogue where the sorting of issues about race and class disparities, gender inequalities and heterosexism and consumer colour can occur”. Hip hop culture should be a space black women create for themselves to discover and question their lives and experiences.

Morgan (2002) says:

“I *like* women. When Mos def in “Ms. Fatbooty” is like “Ass so fat you can see it from the front.” Damn, that’s an ass! That’s an ass I kinda wanna see. That’s an ass I appreciate. So I’m trying to figure out how do we talk about feminism in this case, or being a Black man who is profeminist who at the same time can acknowledge heterosexist desire. And that’s real. There’s a fine line between objectification of Black female sexuality and appreciation of it.” (Morgan and Neal, 2002: 237).

She goes on to say that her generation is not constrained by old ideas of feminism, meaning that feminism can be constructed on a woman’s own terms (Morgan and Neal, 2002).

2.5.1. Critique against Gangsta Rap

There is a debate that argues whether or not sexism has been grossly exaggerated by mainstream media. Hip hop, particularly gangsta rap, is found to glorify sexist, patriarchal and misogynistic behaviours that reflect dominant discourses and values in society (bell hooks, 1994: 116; Loots, 2003: 68). Rose (2004) argues that sexism in hip hop is exaggerated, as it has always existed in popular culture, and is not limited to hip hop culture. hooks (1994) argues that the controversy and sensationalism over gangsta rap and hip hop aims to demonise black youth culture by insisting that it is detrimental to all of society.

However, the fact is that hip hop and rap are cultural expressions and the sexism, patriarchy and misogyny prevalent in this music reflects the white supremacist capitalist patriarchal structure that dominates our society (hooks, 1994). She also argues that it is important to contextualise feminist critiques of sexism and misogyny in music, or else there is a risk of thinking that these behaviours that condone violence against women are explicitly a black male behaviour (hooks, 1994). It is clear that there needs to be a cultural context that gives light as to why misogynistic sentiments exist. It also means looking at the politics of consumerism and who produces gangsta rap (the powerful white men and women and other black people who market this music).

Homophobic lyrics are common within rap music, and should be seen as a result of particular discourses on sexuality, race and identity (Potter, 1995: 97). Black gay men are also consumers of the anti-gay music – particularly black gay men and drag queens in the club scene (Potter, 1995: 102). However, gangsta rappers such as Ice-T and Ice Cube have denounced homophobia, which can influence other rappers to follow suit (Potter, 1995).

A rigorous feminist critique of sexism in hip hop and amongst black men is needed. However, it needs to be contextualised in such a way that points out that misogyny is not a black male pathology, by looking into the existing cultural context young (black) men are socialised into (hooks, 1994: 116-117). Rather than solely being responsible for its reproduction, it can point to the extent to which young black men invest in that privilege (Neal, 2004: 247).

Accountability must be placed on larger structures of domination such as sexism, classism and racism and those in power who uphold these oppressive systems (hooks, 1994: 117). There is a need to problematise black men who are sexist, but it cannot be done so along the lines of the hegemonic critique that criminalises black bodies as the problem (hooks, 1994). One must be critical of sexism as well as racism.

“Your Revolution” by hip hop poet and performance artist Sarah Jones is an example of such critique. This song, although inspired by Gil Scott-Heron’s “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”, is a feminist critique against the misogyny, materialism and the sexualisation of women in rap by playing on hip hop clichés (Parker, 2002: 1). This is evident in the first two stanzas of Jones’ (2001) song:

Yeah yeah, yeah this goes out to all the women and men from New York to
London to LA to Tokyo struggling to keep their self-respect in this climate

Of misogyny, money worship and mass production of hip-hop's illegitimate child,
Hip-Pop.

And this especially goes out to Gil Scott-Heron, friend, living legend
And proto-rapper who wrote "The Revolution will not be Televised."
Much Respect.

Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Not happen between these thighs
Not happen between these thighs²

In response to assertions that she was attacking hip hop, Jones (quoted in Parker, 2002:1) responded by saying: "I'm not attacking hip hop... I'm attacking sexism in the larger culture. I'm a cultural critic and a member of the hip hop generation". This affirms the notion that hip hop culture is influenced by mainstream ideologies such as patriarchy and sexism. However, it can still be enjoyed and critiqued simultaneously.

2.6. Conclusion

Hip hop is a multidimensional culture which, despite originating in the United States in the 1970s, has gone global, appealing to the disenfranchised in society. In going global, it has given people from different parts of the world a chance to adopt the genre and create a more authentic flair based on where the person is from, including the use of local languages. Hip hop has the capacity to be a tool for justice, as well as a tool for pleasure. In this regard, we look at the sub-genre conscious hip hop which is recognised explicitly for its ties towards addressing social, political and economic perils. In doing so, conscious hip hop is a platform for all to narrate black people's lived experiences. Much like conscious hip hop is rooted in pro-black movements like the Black Power movement, in South Africa, the genre is intrinsically linked to Black Consciousness thought. Although the movement has been criticised as prioritising race over connecting with issues of gender, it is still particularly useful as a platform for women to speak of their lived experiences. Black female emcees can use this space to address issues that affect them, broadly and specifically, as black women –

² See Appendix E for complete lyrics

and this includes other intersectionalities such as race, class, geography, sex, disability and more.

While conscious hip hop is not the only hip hop genre to talk about women's experiences, it is considered the one that is most critical of the sexism and misogyny in mainstream popular hip hop and gangsta rap. The critique of sexism in gangsta rap as a reflection of larger social constructions of ideology and power is essential to hip hop feminism. Hip hop feminism also regards hip hop as a platform for both women and men, who may or may not identify as feminists, to critically talk about empowerment, and the contradictory nature of hip hop. In doing so, female hip hop artists can fluidly navigate the creative spaces that exist. Women can construct their identities and rap personas however they want and empower themselves even through ambiguous positioning. There are no binaries or dichotomies, but fluid categories as a result of women's agency in their own subjectivities. These categories can exist in conscious hip hop, so long as the essential message remains the same: speaking critically of the social conditions that affect black people in society. Conscious hip hop is not a mainstream genre and has largely remained underground, this makes it harder to evaluate the significance of conscious hip hop at a national level.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research aimed to understand the nature of the Grahamstown hip hop scene by gathering data from one-on-one in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on women's involvement in the hip hop sphere, and through interviews, gained insight into female rappers' perceptions of themselves, and how male rappers perceive them. This chapter outlines the steps taken in conducting this research. The first section summarised the main and secondary research aims, the research objectives and a brief outline of the interview questions. This third section provides a detailed description of the research procedure taken and the method of analysis used to make sense of the data. It also details the process of achieving rigour and trustworthiness. The conclusion provides a few self-reflections by the researcher.

3.1.1. Research Objectives

This study looked at the following objectives:

- To explore how the Grahamstown hip hop scene operates
- To explore how black female rappers construct their rap identities
- To explore how female rappers are perceived by their male counterparts
- To explore the absence or invisibility of women in hip hop
- To explore whether there is a space for black feminism in hip hop
- To explore whether intersectionality can bear significance in hip hop

3.1.2. Research Questions

- 1) What does the local hip hop scene look like?
- 2) Are black female emcees involved in the local hip hop scene?
- 3) How do black female emcees construct their identities?
- 4) How are black female emcees viewed by their male counterparts?

3.2. Research Design

The type of research design used was one consistent with the qualitative or interpretivist paradigm. According to Pope and Mays (1995:43), qualitative research can be defined as the “development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences and views of

the participants”. The aim of the study was to explore hip hop as a significant platform for women’s issues, and how women have constructed their hip hop identities, and how feminism and intersectionality plays a role in identity construction and hip hop in general.

A qualitative approach “aims to map out the qualitatively different patterns observed in a data-set rather than to quantify magnitudes” (Fugard and Potts, 2015: 670). This research design was the most appropriate as the aim was to explore how women have created meaning through hip hop. The study adopted the interpretive paradigm as an approach given that the focus of the study was on the subjective experiences of individuals in the hip hop scene. The research specifically focused on the small town of Grahamstown as a case study. A case study provides an in-depth account of a specific phenomenon in its true context and environment (Yin, 2003). The method used was one-on-one in-depth interviews from eight participants.

3.3. Data Collection

The main method of data collection in this research was one-on-one in-depth interviews. Qualitative interviews allow participants to reflect in various ways on social phenomenon (Folkestad, 2008). Eight interviews were conducted; four with women and four with men. The questions revolved around women’s participation in the local hip-hop scene, their absence, and how those involved use the music genre as a platform to voice their issues. Subsequent questions considered how male rappers perceive female rappers, and perceptions of black feminism and intersectionality in the music genre. The researcher asked open-ended and semi-structured questions, as indicated on the interview guideline (see Appendix C). In addition, the researcher recorded and took notes in each interview to document and provide the trustworthiness of the research analysis. The interviews focused on people’s subjective and personal experiences within the hip hop scene in Grahamstown, and their perceptions of female hip hop rappers. The interviews looked at the significance of hip hop as a platform for women’s issues and how women have articulated themselves and formed their identities. Questions differed slightly for men and women by asking men what they thought of women rappers, and by asking women rappers what they thought of themselves. A brief introduction of the aims was given to the participants before any questions were asked, to provide them with accurate and appropriate knowledge of what the researcher would ask.

The research methods were structured and semi-structured in-depth interviews. According to Robert Walker (1985:5) in in-depth interviews the researcher allows and encourages the

interviewee to reflect on her/his own experiences. In depth interviews involve “face to face conversation with the purpose of exploring issues or topics in detail”. Burgess (1982: 107) argues that this type of interview allows the researcher to explore issues deeply and unearth new clues and issues and to produce accurate and inclusive accounts based on the personal experience of interviewees. Semi-structured interviews allow for new conversation and different experiences to be put forth. Bryman (2008: 442) states that questions for semi-structured interviews should not be too specific or structured, and a neutral tone should be adopted so as not to lead the interviewee. The questions asked revolved around the experiences and tensions of rappers, to understand how rappers construct their identities and their thoughts on women’s participation in hip hop. Further questions dealt with the experiences and possible tensions within the local hip hop community. The choice of venue was left to the participants so they could feel comfortable in a neutral but informal setting. Interviewees were notified that they could speak isiXhosa should they so wish. Despite this, English was used the main language of choice, with isiXhosa speakers only using their home language in a conversational context, to supplement their exclamations. Each interview was manually transcribed into written text for analysis.

3.4. Thematic Data Analysis

The method of analysis used in this study was a qualitative approach of thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 79), thematic analysis is used for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data”. A rigorous thematic approach can result in an in-depth analysis that answers the specific research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 97). In addition, the method is flexible as it is not tied to any specific theory (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: 3352).

A theme can be defined as “something which captures the key idea about the data in relation to the research question and which represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82). Therefore, a thematic analysis is a method that can reflect reality and unpack phenomena. Themes can either be inductive (bottom up) or deductive (top down). Thomas (2003: 1) notes that the three primary purposes of an inductive approach: firstly, to condense raw data into summary format; secondly, to identify links between research objectives and summary findings; thirdly, to develop a theory about the underlying structure of experiences from the raw data.

In the coding process, the researcher collects data that is most interesting and relevant to the study. While doing this, the key questions asked were whether or not the themes made sense, whether the data supported the themes, if the themes overlapped, if there were subthemes and if other themes existed within the data (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: 3358). Boyatzis (1998) argues that themes can be identified at either a semantic or latent level. The former means that the thematic analysis is at a surface level, whereas the latter attempts to identify the underlying theories informing the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84). Important to note is that the coding of themes does not occur objectively, because researchers are subjective beings, tied to their own set of theoretical and epistemological notions (Braun and Clarke). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), in order to have a good thematic analysis, the data interpretation must be consistent with the theory in the literature. This method allowed the researcher to interpret the research findings based on recurring, dominant and interesting themes. As a result, five major themes were derived from the data collected.

3.5. Research Participants

The research targeted female rappers at first, but due to the lack of women, then expanded to include men. The lack of female participants is attributed to the lack of female rappers in Grahamstown. Four of the participants were Grahamstown residents, the others were either enrolled in or had at some point, attended Rhodes University. Four were women, two of them were lesbian women, four were men. Two doubled as both rappers and event organisers. In terms of geography – four of the rappers were from other cities (Durban, Pretoria, Johannesburg) in South Africa, but currently reside in Grahamstown and have been involved in the hip hop scene for at least four years. The other half grew up and currently live in Grahamstown.

A nonprobabilistic purposive sampling approach was used in the data collection process. According to Patton (1990: 169), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth”. Key informants “not only provide with insights into a matter but also can suggest sources of corroboratory or contrary evidence” (Yin, 1994: 90). In addition, the researcher asked each participant to recommend someone else (another black rapper) who would be interested and knowledgeable in this study. This is called snowball or chain sampling. Also known as network sampling, it involves asking participants involved to recruit others (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007: 113). This type of sampling is suitable for finding information-rich informants, especially because key names

emerge over and over again (Patton, 1990: 176). This was particularly useful for this research due to the lack of female rappers in Grahamstown. This type of sampling approach resulted in the researcher finding women who were most active in the hip hop scene.

3.6. Procedure

As part of the submission procedure, ethical clearance for the study was sought and obtained from Rhodes University. At first, the researcher actively sought out participants by asking strategic informants to recommend artists they knew of. Others were asked if they would be interested in participating via social media - through the advertising by individuals, and through various online groups. Using the snowball pattern, participants were then asked to recommend other rappers they knew of. Each interview began by providing participants with consent forms required for their participation. These forms also included the consent to be recorded, but gave the option of anonymity if wanted (see Appendix B). All the participants agreed to have quotes attributed to their chosen pseudonyms. Each interview ran for approximately 30 minutes, mainly following, but not limited to, questions on an interview guideline (see Appendix C). The researcher used prompt questions throughout a few interviews to maintain focus on the specific topic.

The next important step was to identify themes from the interview data. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that themes and patterns are established through the familiarisation of data, coding data and developing themes (Creswell, 2007). The first step was achieved through the transcription of the interviews. All interviews were transcribed manually, giving the researcher an in-depth knowledge of the data. Then the data was organised into initial codes. This was done manually by highlighting and comparing transcribed interviews. The next process was the development of recurring themes, which required re-checking the transcribed data. Notable and recurring themes were noted down. The final result was five main themes: (1) Women's (In)visibility, (2) (Conscious) Hip Hop as a platform for women's stories, (3) Women's fluid identities, (4) Negative perceptions of female rappers by their male counterparts, and (5) Positive and negative perceptions of feminism and intersectionality.

3.7. Trustworthiness, Reflexivity and Rigour

In qualitative research, it is important to ensure the trustworthiness of your research. There are four steps that should be taken to ensure trustworthiness of a study: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: Shenton, 2004).

Furthermore, a good and sufficient amount of data is needed to prove trustworthiness, as this shows how much work the researcher put in towards the understanding of her data material (Shenton 2004).

Credibility refers to the value of the research findings, as well as how believable they are (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is a two-fold process: the research should be conducted in a manner that is believable, and has to demonstrate its credibility (Murphy and Casey, 2009). Dependability focuses on the stability of the data. Confirmability, a process similar to dependability, involves the neutrality and accuracy of the data (Shenton, 2004). Transferability focuses on whether the data findings can be used in a different context while simultaneously maintaining the meanings derived from its previous study (Leininger, 1994).

In this research, there was prolonged engagement with the participants and the process of triangulation (see below) was undertaken to ensure credibility. Dependability and confirmability of this research is linked to reflexivity and the use of a reflexive journal to document the research process. Transferability was achieved through notes.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), prolonged engagement prompts the researcher to spend an adequate amount of time at the study site to gain a more thorough understanding of the research. Non-participant observation also occurred when the researcher attended various local hip hop events to observe and document the characteristics of the hip hop scene, and who participated in it.

The process of triangulation is a result of several methods used to study a phenomenon (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002). There are two main purposes of triangulation: to confirm the data, and to complete it (Murphy and Casey, 2009). The process of data confirmation entails comparing data from various sources to explore the extent to which the data collected can be confirmed; and in doing so, create a full understanding of the phenomenon to achieve data completion (Murphy and Casey, 2009; Shih, 1998). The use of multiple sources like participant observation, interviews and documents, are beneficial to a case study (Yin, 2003).

Burman (1991: 328) defines the process of reflexivity as a “self-conscious attention to accounts and presentation, to context as well as content”. Rigour can be achieved by the researcher through reflexive writings made throughout the research process. This provides a motivation for the interpretation of the data done by the researcher. To maintain trustworthiness of the research, the researcher must examine the process through which the final result was realised. This can be achieved by an audit trail (Murphy and Casey, 2009).

Comprehensive notes of the researcher's reflections show the motivations and interpretations of the research. In qualitative research, the researcher is not divorced from her/his own epistemological and ontological beliefs. As a result, the credibility of the study also requires the researcher to be self-aware throughout the study (Mantzoukas, 2005). Therefore, throughout this research, a reflective diary was used to document the personal interests and challenges the researcher experienced throughout the research. This was to make transparent the entire research process.

3.8. Limitations

Grahamstown is a small rural university town in the Eastern Cape. The population is small, which limits the sample size. This showed itself in the lack of female participants, despite it being carried out via word-of-mouth. In addition, there is town-township divide that affected who the researcher could access and who was most likely to participate. In addition, heavy reliance on social media means the researcher was less likely to reach truly underground artists residing in the township.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the major findings from the data collection process. Given that the focus of this thesis is on women's experiences of hip hop in Grahamstown, this chapter attempts to lay out the nature of the hip hop landscape by applying black feminist theory and intersectionality. The chapter consists of an analysis of five themes around women's experiences that emerged from the in-depths interviews. Each theme will be explored and analysed. Eight participants were interviewed. As mentioned in the methodological chapter, all the rappers chose to use pseudonyms.

Bless is a female rapper and spoken word artist. She was born and raised in Grahamstown. Sagesse is a female rapper and poet. She is not as well-known as the other three and tends to participate rather than perform. Tswak is a 22-year-old female rapper, poet and feminist student at Rhodes University. She is prominent in the poetry and spoken word scene in town. Sickid is a 22-year-old female hip hop artist from Johannesburg, currently doing her undergraduate degree at Rhodes University. She considers herself a versatile performer and enjoys performing in front of big crowds.

Azlan is a male rapper and events organiser involved in the township hip hop scene. PK is a rapper and events organiser at Rhodes University. He is currently completing his Master's degree. He is passionate about creating a hip hop platform for Rhodes students to express themselves and have fun. King Mat is a 24-year-old male hip hop artist doing his BA Honours at Rhodes University. He has recorded several albums during his years at the university, and performs when given the opportunity. Slum is a 23-year-old male rapper and poet at Rhodes University. He is in a collective with other male rappers at the university. He performs in Grahamstown, and in Durban.

Despite the equal ratio of female to male participants, this thesis focused on women's experiences of hip hop in Grahamstown.

Women's experiences in hip hop fall into the themes of:

- i. "Women's (In)visibility: More Versatility, More Visibility" explores the extent to which women are involved in the local hip hop scene, and whether spaces for them exist.
- ii. (Conscious) Hip Hop as a Platform for Women's Stories provides insight into how women express themselves through hip hop, the interaction between hip hop artists located on different sides of Grahamstown, and creating spaces for women.
- iii. "Women's Fluid Identities: Queen Mother, Lesbian, Fly Sista Attitudes" deals with how female emcees have constructed their own identities and hip hop personas.
- iv. "Negative Perceptions of Female Rappers by their Male Counterparts" details how male rappers perceive their female counterparts.
- v. "Positive and Negative Perceptions of Feminism and Intersectionality" looks into whether it is possible for spaces to exist for different intersectionalities and the extent to which this is possible.

4.2. Women's (In)visibility: More Versatility, More Visibility

The first theme that emerged was the fact that there are not enough black women involved in the local hip hop scene. There was a consensus among all the participants that there is an absence of female rappers in Grahamstown. This was also evident in the lack of female participants, and the fact that the four female rappers interviewed were the only names given when the researcher undertook an extensive snowball sampling exercise. In addition, the four male rappers interviewed only knew the four female rappers involved in the study. Although there has been an increase in the visibility of female rappers globally, and particularly in South Africa, this trend is not noticeable in Grahamstown. However, women do attend the local hip hop events, and participate in other ways, not limited to listening.

When asked if they knew any local female emcees, Azlan (Interview with author, 2017) responded, "The only female I can recall is Bless, and only her in our community. However, I once heard some nice flows from a Rhodes student named Tswak." In agreement, Slum (Interview with author, 2017) noted, "It's not really diverse. I mean I only know two female emcees. Besides Tswak and Sickid, I haven't seen any female rappers. And that's wild because we only saw Tswak in 2015 when we were cyphering outside Oldes and she just caught us on the walk off and just asked if she could rap. And we gave her the platform and

that was that. Sickid I've never even seen; I just see her stuff online". Sagesse (Interview with author, 2017) also pointed out that Tswak was the only female rapper in the cypher video that emerged after that encounter.

The participants, despite not knowing each other, repeatedly mentioned the same female emcees – Tswak and Sickid, and to a lesser extent, Bless. Firstly, this is an indication of how small a town Grahamstown is. Secondly, it shows how small the local hip hop scene is. However, the repetition of specific names shows that despite the invisibility of a diverse group of female emcees, two female rappers are prominent figures in the Grahamstown hip hop scene. Despite this quasi-visibility, there appears to exist no sense of collective women empowerment among the few women actively involved in hip hop. In the interviews, most said that hip hop in Grahamstown is quite an isolating experience. Despite the low number of female emcees in Grahamstown, these women have only vaguely heard of the others. Firstly, they all attend different kind of events. According to Sagesse (Interview with author, 2017), she and Bless attend intimate hip hop cyphers hosted at a friend's house, Tswak performs mostly at open mic events, and Sickid performs in clubs.

Sickid is one of the most visible rappers in Grahamstown because she has performed and continues to perform at numerous events in town:

"I perform anywhere, from Prime, 37 on New, at Rhodes. I've also performed at the Great Field Party um, in 2016 it was called Flying Fish Flavour Fest, so that was by far one of the greatest things I've ever done in my life. Um, I'm still trying to get into clubs that are considered predominantly white... to expand my fan base. So that would be quite interesting. But also, the clubs here, that are predominantly white, for instance Friars, don't even have those platforms where people or artists can [perform]" (Sickid, Interview with author, 2017).

In an attempt to understand whether or not women's invisibility in rap is limited to the local hip hop scene, participants were asked to list South African female rappers they had heard of. Mainstream artists such as Gigi Lamayne, Fifi Cooper, Rouge, Nadia Nakai and Moozlie were mentioned multiple times. However, Slum (Interview with author, 2017) had a better understanding of underground hip hop, saying: "There was Godessa, and I know for a fact there's Yugen Blakrock from the Iapetus crew... I think Protesta as well. We had Sky Wonda, I think Ithabi as well... It's a lot." Sagesse and Bless both cited Godessa as influences. Upon reflection, PK concluded that despite the existence of numerous female

emcees, they do not receive deserved recognition. When prompted further, he could not answer why this was the case, citing that “There’s a lot of dope ones. There’s a bunch of whack ones as well, just like there’s a bunch of whack male rappers” (PK, Interview with author, 2017). Overall, there was a lack of knowledge about underground female rappers, although this may be because they are difficult to find unless one is part of those circles.

Two participants argued that being versatile in hip hop is important, especially if one wishes to remain relevant. For Azlan (Interview with author, 2018), “Those who make it are the ones in the mainstream who are changing content to try and fit in with the industry, otherwise you’ll stay underground forever”. This idea is supported by Slum, who noted that artists should know “when to be woke and when to be gangsta”. The rapper considered most versatile was Sickid. Her response below contributes to the reason why she is the most visible female rapper in local hip hop:

“Music is a very powerful tool, and once you get into people’s eyes people feel entitled to what you feel and they are opinionated. I rap about anything and everything. Sometimes I’m feeling in the blues, sometimes I’m rapping about love and my lived experiences in terms of romance, in terms of struggles, depression, school, family. Um, sometimes I just want to make trap music like ‘look at the bitch, ya ya’” you know! Sometimes I just want to make lit songs that people are gonna be dancing to in the clubs. Sometimes I want to make revolutionary music. So yeah, it’s easy to share my lived experience and to jam.”

Sickid (Interview with author, 2018)

This theme fluctuates between the visibility and invisibility of female emcees in the local hip hop scene. There are few women who participate, depicting an invisibility of rappers. However, two of the four rappers are well-known or at least, have been heard of, making them visible to male and female rappers alike. In addition, these rappers have expressed that they see themselves as visible when they are performing in front of an audience.

4.3. (Conscious) Hip Hop as a Platform for Women's Stories

On the topic of (conscious) hip hop as a significant platform for telling people (especially women)'s stories, King Mat argued that there was a time and place for it. Sagesse argued that conscious hip hop equates to remaining underground throughout one's career, Sickid suggested versatility and Slum said he would stay true to the genre. Hip hop, regardless of sub-genre, is a significant platform for women's issues, this includes mainstream hip hop and gangsta rap. However, there was a strong opinion towards conscious hip hop as a platform to address social ills. This was emphasised by Tswak (Interview with author, 2017): "I believe conscious hip hop is a dope platform to talk about social issues and ills and that's something I'm striving to do. Rap music for me, you know, is the form of expression I can take to talk about the things I think are cool, to talk about the things that are affecting me. So hip hop, rap, a beautiful medium, because it's free you know what I mean? It's just what you feel". Bless (Interview with author, 2017) further argued that: "There's no other hip hop genre that can effectively make people listen. Mainstream hip hop doesn't really allow you to be woke". Sagesse (Interview with author, 2017), spoke about underground music as something that can't be measured against mainstream music because it is "so much more personal and deep. It hits you right in the feels".

Male participants, Azlan and Slum believed that conscious hip hop is the most effective platform because the main objective of the genre is to speak about important issues and critique society, and is therefore more impactful. Although it is true that conscious hip hop is more socially conscious in its socio-political critiques and reflections, hip hop in general should be considered a good platform to talk about issues black men and women face. The power of conscious hip hop lies in its political and social commentary (Parker, 2001), as well as ideas of black consciousness and self-determination (Watkins, 2010).

Another male participant, PK, argued: "Rap is a weird space. It's unbound, uncharted – anything can happen. But I feel like people are more conscious these days like, as long as it's dope it's gonna sell. If your marketing is on point, you can make it."

He implies that so long as people market themselves well, conscious music will have an audience. However, his response does not take into account the divided hip hop population in Grahamstown. Artists marketing themselves should consider equal participation in both the town and township scenes in order to have a bigger audience. With an attentive audience, conscious hip hop can be truly powerful. However, it does depend on the audience

(spectators) and whether they are willing to listen and try to understand your lyrics and experiences. In addition, unless rappers perform regularly around town, there is no other money in the local hip hop scene. The town is small, rappers are isolated, and no one is selling CDs anymore. However, this may not necessarily be the case for nearby big cities like Port Elizabeth and East London, which boast bigger platforms and audiences.

Booking performances and opening for big acts flown down by event organisers is a way forward. However, these spaces may not necessarily be looking for conscious hip hop artists. King Mat argued: “Like, I’m not trying to be in the club listening to J. Cole because it’s the wrong context. Drugs, alcohol and sex sells better than politically conscious music.”

This implies that there is a time and place for conscious hip hop. It is true, conscious hip hop is a more laid-back genre that places more focus on lyrics than the beat. Therefore, it is not often played in clubs, because it is not a mainstream clubbing genre.

4.3.1. Isolating Experiences between Township and Town Rappers

A sub-theme that emerged was the nonexistence of an integrated hip hop scene. Apart from certain events and specific venues opening themselves for live acts, hip hop artists generally tend to operate on their own. This means that there is no central support for rappers, and this has contributed to the lack of cohesion for male and female rappers to link up and participate. This was highlighted in the responses from both Azlan and PK who perform at different ends of Grahamstown:

“Honestly speaking I haven’t even seen as visible connection between the township and Rhodes hip hop hey... Most rappers in Rhodes are just Facebook rappers, you know. Eduroam makes them feel superior... A few hits on Soundcloud and Youtube and then rappers become the ‘Greatest of All Time’ in the Grahamstown community... So you until you deal with that kind of mentality, I don’t really see it working” Azlan (Interview with author, 2017).

“I don’t know all the cats out there, man... There’s a divide between Gtown rappers, and they don’t bother to see what goes on the other side” PK (Interview with author, 2017).

Both Azlan and PK suggest (the former explicitly and the latter implicitly) that the isolation between rappers from different sides of Grahamstown is a result of arrogant attitudes from rappers from Rhodes University, who refuse to leave their comfort zone to interact with other

rappers. They opt, instead for uploading music on Internet, which further isolates other rappers without the resources to stream online.

However, the split between physical and online interaction also affects rappers coming from the same side of town. This is reflected in Slum's personal reflection, who does not look for local rappers' music online nor does he see them in person. In response, he and a group of friends created a collective of black rappers who perform amongst themselves:

Slum: "I'm from a small town in the former Transkei, got involved in the hip hop scene in Durban and then here when I moved to Grahamstown. I've been in Grahamstown since 2014, but then it's weird because we never really got acquainted with the local hip hop scene. I mean, we linked up with Blah ze Blah who's local. Otherwise we don't necessarily know much of the local acts on the ground, and I don't go online. We just started doing the music thing at Rhodes, I'm working on my tape currently. Otherwise we just do a lot of cyphers and shows wherever we get booked. And last year we had a thing of our own called Every Second Friday where we linked every second Friday to have shows. It was a very intimate thing."

There was also a general agreement among the majority of participants that Grahamstown does not provide enough opportunities for people to explore hip hop. Rather, it is a very individualistic space. Sagesse's alienating experience stems from other people's lack of engagement with her music. She has since stopped uploading her music online (Interviewed by author, 2018). She has no support system from either male or female rappers. As mentioned earlier, she prefers informal settings with friends as a platform to perform. Sickid thinks differently:

"You have Rhodes, you have WiFi and you have the Internet. And then you can, you know, relay your music to students, and once you have student capital, you have something big on your hands because students will support you – your friends, your fellow classmates, they will support you. So it's quite nice."

Of all the participants, only Azlan, Slum and Sickid have managed to consolidate a fan base both online and offline. Due to the informal nature of the hip hop scene, there is no single website or social media page that outlines ongoing or future events from both ends of the town. Watch The Throne, hosted by Campus Vibes, seems to be the only real event that links, or tries to link, the township and university. However, that event only occurs once a year. In addition, it is still dominated by university students, despite the growing number of

participants who are not a part of the university. Furthermore, the split between the University radio station, RMR, and Radio Grahamstown is a clear indication of the lack of integration between hip hop artists around Grahamstown. Rappers from the community are more likely to be played on Radio Grahamstown, than university students; and university students are more likely to be played on RMR than rappers who are not enrolled on campus.

Overall, there was a general consensus that women's invisibility is further exacerbated by the lack of integration between town and township. In response to this, three participants recommended creating spaces for women.

4.3.2. Creating spaces for women by women

This shows the importance of creating spaces by women for women. It also implies that the music which men make is considered universal, but women's music is seen as only for women. This can be said to be a result of the male domination of the genre, but it is also an indication of the dominant narratives in society.

King Mat (Interview with author, 2017): "If people, women specifically, could have platforms to support each other they can actually make themselves rise... That would be good. Because your friend is the one who's gonna invest in you more than I'm gonna invest in you, as a guy."

Bringing in a gendered approach to who supports women's music, King Mat and PK point out that women should invest in support groups, thereby creating a platform for women to share music with each other. Although this is not ideal, it may be considered as a necessary starting point. While Bless and Sagesse often support each other, it may be argued that by working alone (as Tswak and Sickid do), female rappers are participating as part of the mainstream, despite being in a marginal group. The more women who do this, the more likely they will no longer be regarded as marginal.

4.4. Women's Fluid Identities: Queen Mother, Lesbian and Fly Sista Attitudes

Each female participant was asked to describe her ascribed identity as a female rapper. This included what kind of style, dressing and mannerisms they adopted with their rap persona. Very quickly, participants pointed out the queen/fly sista with attitude themes in relation to other female rappers. When male rappers were asked if female rappers adopted particular personas, these two attitudes were also singled out. Which means these themes, although used

to describe an African-American audience, can also be used within the context of South African hip hop. Sickid (Interview with author, 2017) identifies as a young black queer woman. Her style emanates from her sexuality, and she tends to don a masculine look and attitude. Sagesse (Interview with author, 2017) describes her style as “hippy and free, with beads and headwraps”. According to Bless (Interview with author, 2017) her rap persona and style is similar to Lauryn Hill. Tswak prefers to dress in “cute and edgy” clothing, which can include short shorts, a crop top and lipstick.

Tswak sees herself via her sexuality and ‘sista with attitude’, whilst Sickid has expressed no intention to label herself, despite her sexual orientation being of public knowledge. She has no maternal stature, and gives off a masculine persona— and this is evident in her lyrics too. In her music, she refers to her female love interests playfully. Sickid makes no effort to hide her sexual orientation, nor is she pressured to.

Sagesse has adopted a ‘Queen Mother’ identity, through which she talks of the importance of black wisdom and solidarity. She also wears headwraps, loose and flowy clothing. Despite not dressing the same way, Bless adopts the type of language connected to this category in her music. Keyes (2000: 256) describes this language as “suggestive of their self-constructed identity and intellectual prowess”.

When interviewees were asked to either mention their style (female rappers) or describe the style of female rappers they know, the artists were also categorised into the Fly Sista, Bitch with Attitude, Queen Mother groupings. They did not necessarily use these words, but when describing themselves, the researcher found that these categories fit.

In terms of fluidity, both Sickid and Tswak move between categories of Lesbian, Fly Sista and Bitch with Attitude, depending on their audience, song of choice and mood of the day. This versatility can be compared to popular artists such as Rouge and Gigi Lamayne who change their personas based on whatever they are singing at that time. Lil’ Kim, Foxy Brown and Yo Yo are female rappers who have successfully navigated the Fly Sista/Bitch with Attitude space (Keyes, 2002).

The male participants were then asked if they thought female rappers subscribed to specific personas or identities. All four mentioned either Queen Latifah, Lauryn Hill or Erykah Badu on one side and Lil’ Kim, Nicki Minaj or Remy Ma on the other end of the spectrum. Queen Latifah referring to the Mother Queen type, while Lil’ Kim was held the Fly Sista/Bitch with Attitude categories. What is interesting is that they perceive these categories as dichotomies,

and not as fluid identities. According to Keyes (2000), these four categories mentioned above are the most common categories from which rappers choose.

King Mat felt very strongly about the “Sista/Bitch with Attitude” rap persona. He argued that women should take themselves “more seriously” by not sexualising themselves because the “African culture [is] more reserved and women aren’t supposed to be that blunt” (Interview with author, 2017). He further argued that the sexualisation of women is big in America because it sells well. When asked if women still exercise their agency and independence despite their choice of dress, PK responded by saying that it matters how women present themselves. In reference to Nicki Minaj, he argues: “I don’t think you want your daughter to be doing that” (Interview with author, 2017). At play here is the politics of respectability. It is implied that black culture rejects nudity and eroticism as Western and foreign, as well as portraying a particular conservative patriarchal view. The implication is also the idea that there can only be a singular type of independent black woman, and nudity can only result in women’s objectification. Black feminist theory critiques respectability politics, especially as it “disrupt[s] strategies that allowed individuals to maintain respectability in face-to-face situations, such as through code-switching” (Pitcan et al, 2018).

Slum was the only male participant, alongside all the female participants to say something positive about women embracing their sexuality as empowering. He mentioned Lil Kim’s progression from rapping like her male counterparts, to coming into her own and inspiring other gangsta female artists.

There may be more than these four categories of women’s rap identities. However, they are still helpful in demonstrating how women can choose to emulate different personas for various reasons. It was insightful to see the ways in which gender bias is employed consciously and subconsciously by the male participants.

4.5. Negative Perceptions of Female Rappers by their Male Counterparts

Women in the music industry as a whole, not just hip hop, have had bad experiences due to patriarchy, misogyny and sexism. This was apparent in the conversations with the female participants. All four female rappers complained either about men not taking them seriously as rappers, or producers asking for sexual favours in exchange for mastering their music. This was either because of their sex or sexuality, or both. Bless, Sagesse and Sickid reflected on the insecurities female rappers experience when they are not taken seriously. Bless (Interview

with author, 2017) pointed out that female rappers are disrespected because men make negative assumptions before hearing any of their work. She also added that in conscious hip hop spaces specifically, women are less likely to face backlash “because it’s a space for social and political storytelling and with the poetry element, women are more likely to navigate that space better, I think”. Sagesse noted that it took her some years before she felt comfortable enough to rap in front of male emcees. Sickid talked about her own experience a few years back, when a friend invited her to participate in a show. “The show started at about 7pm, and they only put me on at 4am in the morning when everyone was going home. Even though I had experience, they all had the mentality that “you’re a female rapper, so no one even cares what you do or say”” (Interview, 2017).

Compared to the above experiences, Tswak argued that she has been viewed as too aggressive in male-dominated spaces:

“I’ve been in spaces where men have felt intimidated by me just from hearing me rap... They usually say I’m too aggressive... And a producer has asked for sexual favours in exchange for my music” (Interview with author, 2017).

Tswak’s personal experience is by no means an isolated event – it occurs to many young women trying to break into the music industry. Men in higher positions assert their dominance and ask for favours in exchange for producing women’s music. This can impact the confidence of young female emcees, making them think they are not as capable as they thought they were. Despite the negative encounter, Tswak continues to persevere with her music and hopes to get into it full-time.

On the topic of sexuality, the Queen Mother vs Fly Sista/Bitch With Attitude dichotomy was introduced again by the female participants. They pointed out that to successfully break into mainstream media, women emcees are expected to look a certain way: beautiful and sexy. Once achieved, the rappers are pitted against each other.

Following this discussion, participants explored the ways in which female artists have entered the mainstream media. A pattern began to emerge as Slum spoke of the Notorious B.I.G and his relationship with Lil’ Kim; King Mat mentioned Jay Z signing Foxy Brown to his label; and Sagesse looked at AKA and Gigi La Mayne. In other words, “to be endorsed, some guy has to invite you to the club and tell the other guys that you’re dope” (Interview with author, 2017).

The general consensus was that the quickest, or rather, surest, way to success was by becoming an underling of a well-known male rapper. The majority of participants gave comparisons of Ice Cube and his protégé Yoyo, Jay Z and Foxy Brown, and Notorious B.I.G. and Lil' Kim as illustrations of men's (positive) influence in hip hop, despite gender constraints. This does not necessarily mean untalented people can merely rely on bigger artists to make a name for themselves, but it means that without a male figure helping you navigate the industry, it is harder for women to access the space. Again, this is a reflection of the various institutions that make it difficult for women to succeed. The same structural constraints inherent in society reproduce themselves in the music industry.

4.6. Positive and Negative Perceptions of Feminism and Intersectionality

Throughout the interviews, participants were asked if they identified as feminists.

4.6.1. Yes, I am a Feminist

Bless, Sagesse and Tswak are explicit about their (black) feminism. They have created their own individual spaces in which they can raise issues they find relevant, that directly relate to their lived experiences – that other black women, when listening, can also relate to. The struggle then is to create a fanbase in a small town like Grahamstown. Artists cannot solely rely on live performances, but have to continuously upload tracks onto listening sites such as Soundcloud. Rappers at Rhodes University make full use of the various university-linked pages to post up their music and encourage students to like and share. The creation of a collective for women empowerment is essential in feminism. In their individual capacity, these female emcees are black feminists, but with no platform to share their experiences with other likeminded black women. However, this does not negate their experiences as black feminists.

4.6.2. No, I don't subscribe to labels

Sickid is the only female rapper who does not explicitly label herself as a feminist. However, while she does not necessarily name what she does as feminism, by creating a platform for herself to speak about her issues through and in turn, empowering other young rappers who feel inspired by her presence – this can be considered as feminism.

This notion also replicated itself among the male participants under the categories of men as feminists and men cannot be feminists.

4.6.3. Men can and cannot be feminists

Two of the male participants did not consider themselves to be feminists. One of the participants stated that feminism was solely for women because he will never be able to understand or relate to women's issues, the way a woman would (King Mat, Interview with author, 2017). PK and Slum were more open, although they admitted that they would never truly talk about women's issues in their music because it "would not be as impactful as if a woman told her own story" (Slum, Interview with author, 2017).

Black feminism can play a role in uniting women in the same industry. Sickid suggests that the hip hop industry in South Africa is no longer as competitive as previous years, as seen by the growing number of mainstream female artists. Sickid (Interview with author, 2017), "before, there could be ten different guys rapping but once there's a female – there can only be one". This is particularly relevant, because when female emcees first broke through into popular media, they were treated as though there could only be one superstar rapper. This was fuelled by mainstream media reporting, but also attempted to prevent women from standing together.

Black feminism and intersectionality are inextricably linked. However, while issues of gender are coming to the forefront (as the second most important social category after race), other social categories such as sexuality and able-bodiedness are ignored. When asked whether there was space for intersectionality in hip hop music, most participants agreed. However, when asked what these intersections were, gender, class and geography emerged as recurring categories. Two women mentioned sexuality is a prominent intersection, however it was largely ignored by others. In fact, the women who mentioned sexuality as a category identified as lesbian. After being prompted, other participants remembered it as an afterthought.

4.6.4. Intersectionality

Whether or not the hip hop space could be intersectional, was one of the last few questions asked in this study. While some said it already was, others had more to say.

Rappers such as Slum, Tswak, Bless and Sagesse have tied their music to black empowerment. They have also spoken about the Fees Must Fall and Rhodes Must Fall movements. Their music reflects their social awareness to the historical patterns of racism and sexism, as well as the structures of oppression that permeate society today. It is evident

however, that rap and hip hop are linked to race and ideology. All the participants have used hip hop as a platform to discuss their own issues and positionalities. This demonstrates the power of hip hop through rappers' self-reflection, and motivations.

Interesting enough, when male participants were asked whether women should focus on their lived experiences as black people or as black women experiencing gender and race simultaneously, male rappers argued the latter. This is very important, because historically women have been told by men to sacrifice the pursuit of gender equality for the “greater good” of the central issue of the black struggle that is race.

Participants also acknowledged that lesbian rappers (like Tswak and Sickid) were making hip hop spaces more intersectional, by virtue of not hiding their sexual orientation, and with Sickid referencing herself through her lyrics. While all of the participants were satisfied with the involvement of people of different class, gender and race and more, some – especially the male participants – were unsettled with the idea of listening to gay male rappers. This suggests that there is a limit to how intersectional this space can be – when it is not sexist, it is homophobic. This suggests issues of male masculinity and sexuality.

King Mat's reaction epitomised the sentiments of a majority of heterosexual male rappers who refuse to listen to any rap that deviates from heteronormativity. He argued that rap is a lifestyle, and “it's hardcore” therefore only people who follow a similar lifestyle would be able to relate to the music (Interview with author, 2017). In response to this, the researcher pointed out that the experience of being young black men living in the Eastern Cape, perhaps occupying the same socio-economic or political stance could serve as a common experience. However, the participant was adamant about the distinctions.

Slum did not have much to say on the subject, but expressed an openness towards hip hop as a platform for expressions of homosexuality:

Slum (Interview with author, 2017): “To each his own hey... I can respect an artist doing his thing [*shrug*].”

It was mentioned earlier that it seemed as though men were more unlikely to listen to women because the assumption is that the lived experiences and therefore content of the music will be too different and difficult to relate to. It is the same case here as some of the male participants feel that gay men's music is completely unrelated to their lived experiences. Again, this is a result of dominant narratives in society that create specific norms and values,

reflected in hip hop culture and the perceptions of male rappers. There will continue to be a gap between women who want to tell their stories and men who will listen to them.

Conclusion

Overall, this analysis unpacked the nature of the hip hop scene in Grahamstown. It is individualistic but productive, there is an antagonism between township and town/university, there is a lack of a cohesive structure because more people post their music online than those who attend live performances. Women are less likely to participate due to intimidation from male rappers and men in general, and those that do participate have to work harder to earn a 'prime' slot. The lack of a women empowerment collective in Grahamstown has contributed to the invisibility of female emcees. There exists no platform for women rappers to congregate and discuss their issues, or discuss ways in which they could become more visible in this space. Women should support each other by creating spaces where they can listen to each other and in turn, influence others to listen along, make choices and seek empowerment (Keyes, 2000: 265). This form of solidarity can result in women affirming each other in safe spaces or a space of acceptance.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study has explored the nature of the hip hop scene in Grahamstown, in relation to women's experiences. Hip hop in Grahamstown has the capacity to be a significant platform, but due to the small nature of this rural university town, and the divide between rappers from the township and those from Rhodes University, local artists across do not consistently engage with each other. University students have created a hub in town that allows for those interested to interact with each other. This occurs online, through various Facebook group pages, where organisers advertise their events, and also where students post links to their own music for others to hear. Some students find this online presence isolating, while others have found support from University students listening online. This divide can also be seen in the lack of organised events in the township, students from town are less inclined to attend and generally do not know what is going on. Event organisers organise their own events and do not engage with each other either. This is also isolating for rappers based in the township, who feel that students from the "other side" are arrogant and unwilling to engage. The Rhodes Music Radio (RMR) has tried on occasion, usually when prompted by an artist, to promote music – however, the audience is not large enough. Radio Grahamstown does play some local content to an extent.

5.1. Lack of visibility for black female rappers

In relation to the antagonism between town and township, there is both an invisibility and visibility of young, black female emcees. The visibility is a result of the participants' answers when asked which local female rappers they knew of. As a result, recurring names across all 8 participants meant these rappers were somewhat visible. However, the fact that only four female emcees were found for this research, again indicates the lack of visibility of women rappers to the wider community. This is also made worse by the lack of engagement between these female rappers who do not interact with each other or even run in similar circles. The absence of an empowerment group for women in hip hop means there is very little support group for other female rappers who would like to get involved in the local scene. Although, had the research been focused on spoken word and poetry, the number of female participants would have increased significantly.

This study also found that women's identities within rap are fluid, and that there are real categories female rappers base their identities from (intentionally or unintentionally). In contrast, the male rappers interviewed, view women's identities as dichotomous:

respectable/queenly or too explicit. Women's identities are not constrained to particular images or even messages and versatility in hip hop music is recommended. The nature of hip hop is that it allows for various forms of expressions and styles, depending on one's mood. This research took into consideration live performers and artists who release their music online. It was found that those who have an online presence do take the initiative to do live acts, and they are easier to track down.

5.2. Black feminist theory and Intersectionality

Black feminism emerged as a space for black women to address the issues that affect them as black women. Historically, black women have been erased from mainstream feminism which was white and middle class. This theoretical framework is informed by intersectionality, which argues that people face multiple oppressions in their day to day lives. This idea informs third world feminism, which is a broader feminist struggle that includes colonial oppression into the fold. Capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy systematically oppress people in all spheres of life – economically, politically and culturally. Third World feminism not only points out the shortcomings and historical erasure of people and women of colour, but also asserts their political agency and control over their own lives. Hip hop feminism is in line with these theoretical underpinnings.

5.3. Hip hop as a platform for women's issues

This research concludes that hip hop is a significant platform for women's issues, but there is work that needs to be done to ensure that other women become a part of this community and become more visible. By creating a space for women by women, it encourages more narratives from female rappers and brings in a bigger audience. This would make up for the lack of male interest in female rap, and for those who see other lived experiences as unrelated to their lives. Hip hop feminism, advocates for a truthful and reflective interpretation of hip hop. What is significant is that this type of feminism leaves room for young black feminists to create their own understandings of hip hop, patriarchy and sexism. While there is a space for intersectionality - specifically, class, gender, sexuality and geography – it appears as though young black men are not ready to share the space with other young gay black men. Implicit and explicit sentiments of homophobia in rap music are reflective of dominant discourses in society that influence values and norms.

Young female emcees in the Grahamstown community do use hip hop as a platform to talk about their experiences as women, whether positive or negative. This is despite the fact that women are largely excluded in mainstream hip hop discourse. Despite the increase of female artists worldwide and in South Africa, particularly, there remain structural constraints that limit female rappers. This thesis does not delve deep into the causes of the absence of women, but seeks to point out the disparities between male and female emcees.

5.4. Five thematic areas

To summarise, this research explored the nature of the local hip hop scene and women's involvement through five themes: (1) "Women's (In)visibility: more versatility, more visibility"; (2) "Isolating experiences between town and township rappers", (3) "Women's fluid identities: queen mother, lesbian, fly sista attitudes", (4) "Negative perceptions of female rappers by their male counterparts" and (5) "Positive and negative perceptions of feminism and intersectionality". 8 black rappers between the ages of 18 and 24 participated in the study. Of the 8, 4 were women, 2 of whom were lesbian. 4 men participated, all were heterosexual black males. The participants occupied various social class positions (from lower to middle class). In-depth interviews were conducted, with open-ended and semi-structured questions. A thematic analysis was used to interpret the collected data.

5.5. Limitations

There are various limitations in this study. As mentioned throughout the research, Grahamstown is a small, rural university town, and there were not enough female participants to begin with. A suggestion would be that a study like this be done in a bigger city, with a specific focus on only female rappers. In the Eastern Cape context, cities like Port Elizabeth and East London would make for a more in-depth understanding of the nature of hip hop in the province. This study is limited to Grahamstown, and may not necessarily represent the hip hop scenes of other towns. Using a bigger city as a case study could illustrate the significance of women's voices in hip hop in terms of quantity of female participants. Time was also a big constraint. A study like this should have been done more thoroughly and over a longer period of time. Other limitations include the lack of an integrated space where all rappers can congregate and share music. Without strategic informants, it would have been harder to locate the few female participants interviewed for this research.

5.6. Final Reflections

The goals of this research were to understand the overall nature of the hip hop scene in Grahamstown, and to explore to what extent it serves as a platform for women's issues. The objectives of the research were to explore how black female rappers construct their identities, and to explore how female rappers are perceived by their male counterparts. In exploring these identities, look at whether or not there is a space for black feminism and intersectionality in hip hop. There were not enough participants to truly explore the diversity and fluidity of female rappers' identities. However, the lack of female participants highlighted a crucial issue – the invisibility of women in hip hop at a local level. Black feminism and intersectionality were useful conceptual tools in understanding how black emcees navigate the hip hop space, and by extension, their lives.

Hip hop is one of the most influential cultural movements. It is as complex as it is diverse, but it will always be an important medium to articulate art and lived experiences.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Hello,

My name is Sasha Kabwato (G12K1487) and I am a Master's student in the Sociology Department. I am conducting a study on young black rappers in the Grahamstown community. The aim of the research is to explore the local hip hop scene, and to find out whether it is a significant platform for women's experiences. I am particularly interested in black female rappers who are active within the hip hop community. I will be conducting 30 minute one-on-one interviews. And you may remain anonymous if you wish.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating.

Appendix B: Participation Consent Form

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Title: Hip-Hop as a platform for women's issues in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape

Consent Form for Interviews: a Qualitative Study

If you are happy to participate then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

	<i>Please Initial box:</i>
I confirm that I have understood the topic of this thesis.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my name will be linked with the research materials, and will be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research, unless I choose not to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for this interview to be tape-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my anonymised data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Principal Investigator	Date	Signature

Appendix C: Interview Guideline

1. Do you consider yourself a rapper?
2. What name would you like to use in this interview?
3. What type of Hip Hop are you involved in?
4. How do you define yourself?
5. What is your rap style, identity or persona?
6. What does the local hip hop scene in Grahamstown look like?
7. What have you noticed about hip hop in the township and hip hop in town?
8. How many years have you been involved?
9. Is Hip Hop a significant platform for women's experiences?
10. Have you performed alongside other women?
11. Do you know any other female rappers in Grahamstown?
12. Where do you regularly perform?
13. What do you rap about?
14. How has this shaped your experiences?
15. How have you been perceived by your male counterparts?
16. Have you had any negative experiences?
17. Are people surprised when they find out you're a rapper?
18. What do you think of black feminism?
19. Is there a space for black feminism and/or intersectionality in hip hop?
20. Is there an absence of women in hip hop (Broadly, in SA, in Gtown)?
21. How can we explain this absence?

Appendix D: Godessa – Social Ills lyrics

[Chorus: Godessa]

So many social ill, society breeds
It's like sobriety kills the reality that feeds
Off the air that we breathe there is no need to deceive
Through the eye of the beholder, I can see

[Verse: Shame]

Is it your Nike sneakers or Filas that breaches
The code of conduct that features in stores
Collecting salaries like whores on low calories
Both trying to marry me with fashionable jeans
So expensive can't tear the seam apart
From the need to laugh at a gifted form of art
Switch the norm from light to dark
Don't you know that Adam and Eve draped leaves right from the start
It's hard to understand why you don't wear what you like
You wear what you think that they think is tight
And I don't think it's right
To find replicas of Jennifer's all over the world
Every boy and girl as fake as extensions or curls
Those keeping it real and those chilling of coz
Keep flossing that shit to spinning these words
Coz popular culture's a bitch is what I heard

[Verse: EJ]

Right if I'm different never judge me by your book
See what I wear and how I look, might leave the in crowd shook
Like the fingerprints of a crook (crook)
You can immediately make that distinction by just one look
It's like society conditions you to be a clone
And when your seeds grow up they lack a mind of their own
And the media perpetuates the situation
With advertising rituals as the exclamation

[Repeat Chorus 2x: Godessa]

[Interlude: Godessa]

Eye of the beholder... so many social ills (social ills)

[Verse: Burni]

It's the possible critical multi cultural particles
Physiological visuals the typical individual
Don't wanna bore dem with oracles, wanna stick up their nostrils
Gullible one syllable mediocre individuals
If you don't fit the conventional essential
Editorial like cartoon pictorials
Individual development ain't affordable so this is in memorial
Of people with hair in all the wrong follicles
Probable cause as society flaws caught in the claws
Can't be original of course
I got a divorce from Levi's jaws and musical whores
Media is the source when it comes to mental source
And public applause
Knowledge of self is personal wealth we need to question ourselves
And kick pink panther mickey mouse snouts with big mouths
Below their motherfucking belts (that's what I'm saying!)

[Verse: EJ]

Deviation from the norm
Is similar navigation in the storm
This mainstream slave ship is sailing and before long
You will mourn when your individuality is gone
So caught up in material bullshit
That the thought of being real seems putrid
Whatever else you hear seems to be muted or strange
Coz imitations the epitome' of fear for change

[Repeat Chorus 2x: Godessa]

Appendix E: Sarah Jones – Your Revolution lyrics

Yeah yeah, yeah this goes out to all the women and men from New York to
London to LA to Tokyo struggling to keep their self-respect in this climate
Of misogyny, money worship and mass production of hip-hop's illegitimate child,
Hip-Pop.

And this especially goes out to Gil Scott-Heron, friend, living legend
And proto-rapper who wrote "The Revolution will not be Televised."
Much Respect.

[Verse]

Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Not happen between these thighs
Not happen between these thighs
The real revolution ain't about booty size
The Versaces you buys, or the Lexus you drives
And though we've lost Biggie Smalls
Baby your notorious revolution
Will never allow you to lace no lyrical douche, in my bush
Your revolution will not be killing me softly, with Fugees
Your revolution ain't gonna knock me up without no ring
And produce little future emcees
Because that revolution will not happen between these thighs
Your revolution will not find me in the backseat of a jeep
With LL, hard as hell, you know doin' it and doin' it and doin' it well
Doin' it and doin' it and doin' it well, nah come on now
Your revolution will not be you smacking it up, flipping it, or rubbing it down
Nor will it take you downtown or humpin around
Because that revolution will not happen between these thighs
Your revolution will not have me singing, ain't no nigga like the one I got
And your revolution will not be sending me for no drip, drip VD shot
And your revolution will not involve me, feelin' your nature rise

Or helping you fantasize
Because that revolution will not happen between these thighs
No no, not between these thighs
Oh, my Jamican brother, your revolution will not make you feel bombastic
And really fantastic
And have you groping in the dark for that rubber wrapped in plastic
You will not be touching your lips to my triple dip of French vanilla,
Butter pecan, chocolate delux
Or having Akinyele's dream, m-hmm a 6-foot blowjob machine m-hmm
You want to subjugate your queen? uh-huh
Think I'm a put it in my mouth, just 'cause you made a few bucks?
Please brother please
Your revolution will not be me tossing my weave
And making me believe I'm some caviar-eating ghetto mafia clown
Or me giving up my behind, just so I can get signed
And maybe having somebody else write my rhymes
I'm Sarah Jones, not Foxy Brown
You know I'm Sarah Jones, not Foxy Brown
Your revolution makes me wonder, where could we go
If we could drop the empty pursuit of props and ego
We'd revolt back to our Roots, use a little Common Sense
On a quest to make love De La Soul, no pretense
But your revolution will not be you flexing your little sex and status
To express what you feel
Your revolution will not happen between these thighs
Will not happen between these thighs
Will not be you shaking and me *yawn* faking
Between these thighs
Because the real revolution, that's right I said the real revolution
You know I'm talking about the revolution
When it comes, it's gonna be real
It's gonna be real
It's gonna be real
When it finally comes

When it finally comes
It's gonna be real, yeah yeah