# Stunning the Nation: Representation of Zimbabwean Urban Youth Identity in Some Songs by Stunner

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Hip Hop as a music genre has become one of the hottest sensations among youth, not only in America but the world over. Consequently it is necessary to attempt to define Hip Hop and to understand the historical influences surrounding its emergence. Hip Hop is defined as a culture and form of ground breaking music and self-expression, which consists of four basic elements: deejaying, emceeing, breakdancing and graffiti (Stavrias: 2005, Morgan and Bennett: 2011). Stavrias (2005) goes a little further to elucidate on these four basic elements of hip hop. He posits that deejaying is when the deejay creates hip hop's music by playing the break section of the record, cutting from one break to the next and matching the tempo to make a smooth transition that a crowd can dance to or an emcee can rhyme to. Breakdancing refers to the extremely physical dancing style that is danced to the beats of Hip Hop music. Emceeing is the method of vocal delivery of Hip Hop's music commonly known as rapping. Graffiti is the process of writing one's tag with a marker or spray paint on a wall in a public space and painting murals. Morgan and Bennett (2011) aptly capture these four basic elements of Hip Hop when they assert that Hip Hop,

"…is the distinctive graffiti lettering styles that have materialised on walls worldwide. It is the latest dance moves that young people perform on streets and dirt roads. It is the bass beats and styles of dress at dance clubs. It is local MCs on microphones with hands raised and moving to the beat as they shout out to their crews" (1).

From these insights one gathers that Hip Hop does not simply refer to the music developed by African-American youth, it refers to the music as well as the arts, media and cultural movement and community developed by black American youth. Levy (2001) acknowledges these basic elements of Hip Hop but goes further to assert that Hip Hop is,

"a global subculture that has entered people's lives and [has] become a universal practice among the youth the world over. From a local fad among black youths in the Bronx, it has gone to become a global practice, giving new parameters of meaning to otherwise locally and nationally diverse identities."(134)

Central to Levy's explanation is the contention that it would be simplistic for one to consider Hip Hop merely as a music genre, it is in fact a way of life. It refers to the aesthetic, social, intellectual and political identities, beliefs, behaviours and values produced and embraced by its members (Morgan and Bennett: 2011). Stavrias (2005) concurs with Morgan and Bennett when he maintains that Hip Hop is more than a style of music, it is a youth lifestyle that has evolved from its humble beginnings in the Bronx in the early 70s into a cultural and economic phenomenon of global proportions. Taking Levy, Stavrias and Morgan and Bennett's insights as points of reference, one is led to the understanding that Hip Hop has become a force to be reckoned with, because it has cultural associations that cannot be overlooked.

Another important dimension to Hip Hop is the fact that it is predominantly immersed in youth activity and is emblematic of the black populace. This is an important dimension because "youth" and "black race" are illustrative of subalternity. Being a youth is associated with immaturity, deficiency, vulnerability, neglect and deprivation (Munchie: 2004), while being a black person reflects a painful history of oppression and dehumanisation by imperialist forces. This means that through Hip Hop the subaltern has found another artistic way of expressing themselves, and Hip Hop has become another mode through which the subaltern can be understood.

Taking the debate from the argument that Hip Hop is a genre of the subaltern it becomes necessary to gain some insight into the socio-political milieu surrounding the development of Hip Hop. There are debates surrounding the origins of Hip Hop with some scholars arguing that Hip Hop has its roots in the West African diasporic art form of the griot (Keys: 2002). Nonetheless, the general consensus is that Hip Hop began to be noticed as a music genre in the Bronx between the 1960s and 1970s (Baxter and Marina: 2008, Strivrias: 2005, Levy: 2001). Hip Hop was constructed around the anger and frustration experienced by African American youth because the society within which they existed could not bear their presence and so the African American had to live at the margins of that society (Gladney: 1995, Gayle: 1971). West (1990) notes that Hip Hop was a musical expression of the paradoxical cry of desperation and celebration of the black underclass and poor working class. Hip Hop openly acknowledged and confronted the wave of personal cold heartedness, criminal cruelty and existential hopelessness in the black ghettos of America. Therefore, Hip Hop was created with an implicitly resistant dimension to it. It was a challenge to the hypocrisy of American democracy that purported that the African-American was a free citizen and yet the reality was that the African-American was still weighed down by poverty and racial injustices. Hip Hop was thus used as an artistic expression that was designed to cope with urban frustrations and conditions.

To understand Hip Hop only in terms of resistance and frustration is tantamount to doing this dynamic art form a grave injustice. It is true that Hip Hop expressed the urban impoverished experience of the African-American, but Hip Hop surpassed these feelings of frustration and resistance. It was also a visible, though oftentimes controversial, celebration of the African-American identity. After years of being objectified and being treated as second class citizens Hip Hop became another way of the

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African-American to assert their presence and their humanity. The devil may care attitude that is often synonymous with Hip Hop reflects the necessity to unapologetically embrace one's humanity despite the overarching limitations. Tricia Rose (1994) confirms this paradigm of Hip Hop moving beyond mere resistance when she argues that Hip Hop provides young black people with an alternative path to identity and social status. More space is required to deconstruct the underlying forces behind the controversies associated with Hip Hop but this study posits that the black American youth felt alienated from and hostile to their impoverished condition. Consequently this alienation and hostility sometimes manifested in their music.

The foregoing discussion was an attempt to define Hip Hop and to establish the historical and political milieu surrounding its development. It is important, however to situate Hip Hop within the African framework because this paper's focus is on African Hip Hop. The subsequent discussion is therefore an attempt to trace the emergence of Hip Hop in Africa and to illustrate how Hip Hop in Africa has influenced our everyday socio-economic and political involvements.

Contextualising Hip Hop in Africa

From the black underclass in the ghettos of America, Hip Hop rose to accomplish remarkable economic success and cultural impact. Accordingly youth from around the world began not only to consume Hip Hop music but they also began to produce their own Hip Hop cultural forms. In Africa, Hip Hop arrived between the 1980s and early 1990s. For instance rappers such as Senegal's MC Linda, MC Solar and Positive Black Soul pioneered Hip Hop in Africa. Since then Hip Hop has spread with the vigour and passion of a cultural revolution (www.allafrica.com/stories/200710011449.html). According to their website, All Africa new argues that the emergence of Hip Hop in Africa was intrinsically an imitation of African-American Hip Hop as African artists simply reproduced the music, dancing, art and clothing coming out of the African-American Hip Hop scene. Like African-American Hip Hop artists, African Hip Hop artists also told stories of poverty, crime, violence and corruption (www.allafrica.com/stories/200710011449.html). Consequently, when Hip Hop came to Africa it was received with suspicion as there were questions pertaining to its originality and Africanness. There was also scepticism relating to hip hop's influence on African youth. African-American Hip Hop was economically successful but it was laden with a lot of controversies. Negative views were attached to the genre and its practitioners, such as Public Enemy, did not make any efforts to shy away from the bad boy image attached to them. The "in your face" attitude synonymous with Hip Hop practitioners left a bad taste in mainstream American culture. Thus, it is these negative associations with Hip Hop that resulted in it being received with distrust in Africa. It was common to associate Hip Hop with moral bankruptcy and to identify it as an agent of American cultural imperialism (Stavrias: 2005). In the African context music has always played a crucial role in shaping and influencing societies in a positive way, art for art's sake is commonly frowned upon in African circles because art should be functional, collective and

committed. Thus, if African Hip Hop had to be accepted in Africa, it somehow had to discover a way of transcending its mimesis of African-American Hip Hop and to come up with a Hip Hop that tells the African story and reflects the African's everyday lived experiences.

Because Hip Hop had its roots in an African diaspora art form, its presence in Africa raised questions about origins and homecomings (Morgan and Bennett: 2011), consequently, Hip Hop in Africa overcame its mimesis stage of development as a results of the artists' sense of cultural authority. Hip Hop in Africa has been redefined to the extent that it can be labeled "glocal." "Glocalisation" refers to one's ability to simultaneously engage in the intersections of global and local dynamics (Morgan and Bennett: 2011). African Hip Hop artists have had to engage in these global and local intersections in the production of their music. Hence they typically developed their own styles drawing from local and cultural art forms and addressing the social and political issues that affected their communities and nations. Nonku Vundla's aka Blackbird "Prayer for Somalia" glaringly demonstrates this dynamic. In the song, one can hear the Hip Hop beat that is synonymous with female rappers such as Nicki Minaj, but Vundla infuses her lyrics with Shona. Moreover, typical of African art forms, the song has a purpose which is to addresses concerns of hunger and poverty in Somalia. This shows that African Hip Hop is simultaneously loyal to and distinct from its American origins (Dominello: 2008).

African Hip Hop has not only been entangled in the socio-economic issues of the day, there are cases when Hip Hop has been used to address political issues as well. Because Hip Hop is predominantly a youth activity, governments have not missed the political potential of a youth movement that could be encouraged by supporting Hip Hop artists. Manase (2009) aptly demonstrates this point in his analysis of Zimbabwean urban grooves. Zimbabwean "urban grooves" is an umbrella term that refers to Zimbabwean musical outfits that gained prominence during the post 2000 decade. The urban grooves draw from Western hip hop, rhythm and blues and raga beats and it is from this movement that Zimbabwean Hip Hop stars such as Stunner, were born. Manase (2009) shows how the emerging Zimbabwean Hip Hop artists such as Stunner, Ex Q and Maskiri infused Shona lyrics in their music as a performance practice that affirmed government expectations that artists sing in local languages. As a result of this, artists have had to negotiate between the need to remain authentic yet at the same time affirm the state's expectations that artists refer to local social experiences, history and culture (Manase: 2009). Manase's study aptly demonstrates how African Hip Hop has been politicised to serve state interests but studies have also shown that African Hip Hop has been used to oppose the state as well. Morgan and Bennett (2011) provide a classic example of how African Hip Hop has been actively entangled in political issues when they refer to Master Mimz a Moroccan female MC, who openly supported the Egyptian revolution that eventually led to the resignation of Mubarak by releasing the song "Back down Mubarak". This exemplifies how Hip Hop can be used to defy and challenge autocratic governments.

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From the preceding discussion it is noticeable that African Hip Hop is not all about "I shot your mum…fuck your dad…" or about "bling…niggaz…bitches and hos" (Bere: 2008). In fact, African Hip Hop attempts to be grounded in firm African principles and to stray away from the stereotypical negative images cultivated by African American icons such as Tupac. African Hip Hop actively engages with societal issues and "…engages and integrates innovative practices of artistic expression, knowledge production, social identification and political mobilisation" (Morgan and Bennett: 2011). This paper attempts to assess the representations of Zimbabwean urban youth identity in selected songs by Stunner, to achieve this it is necessary to contextualise Hip Hop in Zimbabwe so as to understand the socio-economic and political influences surrounding its emergence. Accordingly the ensuing discussion traces the emergence of Hip Hop in the Zimbabwean context.

The Zimbabwean Hip Hop scene

There is not much scholarly engagement on when exactly Hip Hop rose to significance in Zimbabwe. However the general consensus is that Zimbabwean Hip Hop gained significant recognition in the early 1990s. Like earlier forms of Hip Hop in Africa, Zimbabwean Hip Hop was cripplingly influenced by American Hip Hop traditions and it lacked originality. Early practitioners of Zimbabwean Hip Hop simply replicated American Hip Hop and Bere (2008) refers to this kind of music as "world beat". It was a performance of renditions of what Bere (2008) refers to as world beat hip hop. According to Bere, world beat Hip Hop is that which merely imitates and reproduces US mainstream Hip Hop culture without being incorporated into the local body of music.

Present-day Zimbabwean Hip Hop has made huge strides towards redefining a sound that is recognised as "local beat". Bere defines "local beat" as the incorporation of "world beat" sounds into the local body of music. As a result of the need to account for local traditions of art and culture, Zimbabwean Hip Hop artists infuse their music with local Shona or Ndebele lyrics as well as traditional musical instruments such as "mbira". Synik's "Sin City" is one good example of an artist's attempt to adopt Hip Hop so that it represents local art forms. The song's mixture of some typical Hip Hop beats and the "mbira" sound in the background encapsulates the artist's quest to remain an authentic Zimbabwean artist. The adoption of local languages in Zimbabwean Hip Hop is a very important dimension that needs to be elucidated. There is a reciprocal relationship between language and culture as they both reinforce each other. Every culture has a language that best expresses it and so the use of local languages in Hip Hop songs represents the need to develop local cultures so as to inform, and showcase the African worldview, norms and complications. Against the background of Eurocentric notions of Africans as a people without a culture, the infusion of native languages in Hip Hop is important in correcting the misinformation about Africa.

Williams (2007) argues that Hip Hop culture has been a space where the youth of today have found identity, humanity and a place to develop their critical consciousness through the engagement of humanising discourse such as art, music and dance and other creative expression. This has been true to the Zimbabwean situation as Hip Hop has created agency for Zimbabwean youth. Hip Hop shows, such as "Mashoko and the

Circle" have made strides towards elevating Hip Hop in Zimbabwe. Such shows also reflect the collectivism that is synonymous with African artistic expressions. Coming from a country that has experienced a debilitating socio-economic and political crisis, Zimbabwean Hip Hop easily articulates refreshing and interesting perspectives on the Zimbabwean crisis. It is vibrant and has the potential to raise awareness. However, like its American counterpart, Zimbabwean Hip Hop has also been accused of being a negative influence on youth culture and identity (Nyasha: 2008, Kapamwe: 2008). Zimbabwean Hip Hop has been condemned on the basis of violent and misogynistic lyrics (Chari: 2008). This paper however will not fall into the trap of rushing to view Hip Hop as a bad influence on youth identity. The paper chooses to analyse selected songs by Zimbabwean MC Stunner, a typical bad boy in the Zimbabwean Hip Hop circles. Most of his songs reflect the patriarchy, misogyny and materialism that is common to hip hop. In 2011, Stunner was involved in a sex tape scandal between him and girlfriend Pokello Nare which viral on the internet and did not cover him in glory, instead it validated his bad boy status. By zeroing on this typical "bad boy", the paper questions the normative overtones of Hip Hop and youth identity. The paper argues that the prescribed standard of stereotyping Hip Hop as a negative force around the youth masks the music's potential to deliver socially relevant material.

Methods of Research

Because this paper aims to stray away from the normative conclusions of regarding Hip Hop as negatively representing and influencing youth identity, the researcher had to make strategic choices in the research methodology. Therefore, purposive sampling was used in selecting the music that could reflect the study's objectives. Purposive sampling is a method in which a sample is deliberately chosen due to the qualities it possesses (Tongco: 2007). Since the researcher has decided on the information that needs to be known, purposive sampling is ideal as it enables the researcher to select material that reflects this information. Purposive sampling is without its faults, it has been heavily criticised on being biased but this study argues that "the inherent bias of the method contributes to its efficiency" (Tongco: 2007). The selected songs were subjected to discourse analysis so as to interpret the underlying social structures which may be assumed or played out in the songs.

Theoretical Framework

Zimbabwean Hip Hop is a post-colonial activity and so this study is informed by post-colonialism as a theoretical inquiry into the representations of urban youth identity in Hip Hop music. Definitions of post-colonialism are not conclusive but the general agreement is that post-colonialism ascertains a trial of societies emerging from the experience of colonialism (McFadden: 2002, Bhabha: 1994). Mbembe (1992) posits that the post-colonial present is complex and contradictory and its subjects have had to have a marked ability to manage not just a single identity but several which are flexible enough to negotiate as and when required. Bhabha (1994) takes Mbembe's insights further by insisting that the postcolonial world should valorise spaces of mixing, spaces where truth and authenticity move aside for ambiguity. Considering the oppositional and conflicting forces surrounding African youth identity and African hip hop, the post-colonial theory

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becomes relevant to this study as it would capture the "…hybrid inadequacies of [Hip Hop and the youth's] post-coloniality (Gandhi: 1998). The postcolonial concern with cultural diversity appeals to this study because it allows the study to move away from common suppositions around the influence of Hip Hop on youth identity.

Stunner's Representation of Zimbabwean Urban Youth Identity

An analysis of Stunner's selected songs points to five related themes:

### Stunner's Representation of Young Urban Women

Hip Hop has been criticised for its patriarchal and misogynistic lyrics and an analysis of some songs by Stunner validates this criticism. The image of young women as materialist is a primary image in most of his songs. In "Live your life", Stunner revels in his rise to fame and fortune and this augmentation results in "*vasikana vandaimbopresser nhasi vaakundisona* (the girls that I used to pursue now chase after me)"[1]. Stunner fashions a discourse in which women are categorized as parasites, whose main inspiration is material achievement. He insinuates that young women are phoney and incapable of genuine love, and that all they care about is money and living a life of luxury. "Team hombe" reiterates Stunner's indications when he sings:

| | |
|---|---|
| From city to city | From city to city |
| Told you Stunner's got spouses | I told you Stunner has got spouses |
| That's why *mababie hobho* | That's why a lot of girls |
| *Arikuda kundibvisa matrousers.* | Would like to take off my pants |

These kinds of lyrics encourage dominant cultural narratives that stereotype women as trivial. Chari (2008) reasons that negative lyrics about women have the potential to create pretexts for the escalation of violence and sexual exploitation of women.

Stunner's songs also objectify women: he portrays women as sex objects. In the song "Body", Stunner is enamoured with his lover's stimulating body. In the song, there is no regard for other facets of a woman's identity that can be appealing to a man. Aspects such as intelligence, thoughtfulness, etc. are not regarded by so doing, Stunner's song contributes to a negative understanding of what it means to be a woman. "*Musikana chidhakwa*" (That girl is an alcoholic) is an attempt to construct and define what it means to be an ideal woman. According to the song, consuming alcohol incapacitates a woman's potential to be "ideal" or as Stunner puts it "ladylike". The song ultimately aims to pacify women because the act of consuming alcohol is usually mostly done in public places such as pubs, clubs or beer halls, places that are considered men's terrain. Considering that a significant number of young women in Zimbabwe consume alcohol, this song is demeaning and has the potential to play havoc with their sense of identity.

A lot can be said on Stunner's representation of young women in urban Zimbabwe but for the purposes of not being redundant, this study will not delve further into the

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[1] All translations have been done by the author.

subject. The study does not excuse these representations but instead encourages critical thinking and advocates for a balanced argument concerning the way Stunner has represented young women's identity in Zimbabwe. Williams (2007) maintains that Hip Hop is intimately and inextricably linked to societal influences. By virtue of being a young man in an unambiguously patriarchal society, Stunner cannot escape the influences of patriarchy that shape feminine and masculine identities. If Stunner sounds patriarchal and oppressive to women it is because he is a man of his times and is not independent from his culture. The solution lies in a transformation of masculine and feminine identities that shape our existence.

## Urban Youth and the Acquisition of Wealth

A superficial analysis of Stunner's songs would easily lead to the conclusion that he represents Zimbabwean urban youth as materialistic and heavily concerned with amassing wealth. These conclusions would be understandable because Stunner's lyrics openly celebrate materialism and capitalism. In "*Team hombe*" he sings:

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|---|---|
| "*Makushamiswa ndaita mari zvakare* | You are surprised that I have made money |
| *Asi ndimi maimboti magitare haabhadhare.* | Yet you thought music doesn't pay. |
| …I am now a grown man | …I am now a grown man |
| Doing grown man things | doing grown man things |
| *Ndakutora vasikana venyu* | I am taking your girlfriends |
| CD *rangu muchitenga* | Still you buy my CD |
| …*Zvinhu zvisina mari* | …Anything that does not make money |
| Please return to sender. | Please return to sender. |

The song "*Godo*" also repeats Stunner's position on the acquisition of wealth. In the song he refers to making money as "big boy business" and the video features Stunner riding in fancy and expensive cars, wearing fancy and expensive brands of clothes and "bling" or gold chains

To conclude that Stunner represents urban youth as driven by self-indulgence runs the risk of masking the socio-economic factors surrounding these lyrics. Stunner's depiction of urban youth and the acquisition of wealth can also be studied from the position that wealth in this case is synonymous with visibility. Coming from a context in which Zimbabwe was facing the crippling socio-economic and political crisis of the previous decade, youth vulnerability was intensified. The economic crisis pulled youth further into the abyss of invisibility and subordination. Youth were trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and they constituted the highest rates of unemployment (The National Youth Council: 2000). The preoccupation with material gain in Stunner's songs captures this "dog eat dog" era and represents the youths' preoccupation with survival and bread and butter issues.

Stunner's youth do not accept their fate without a fight, instead they are active and they "hustle" so that they can realise the improvement of their condition. Most Hip Hop artists hail from the high density suburbs, places that are not fully developed and were hit the hardest by the economic crisis. Thus the need for money that Stunner captures in his

songs represents the youth's need to transcend their subordination. Stunner juxtaposes the ability to make a lot of money with "doing grown man things or Big business", this clearly demonstrates that youth who hunger to make money long to rise above their inferior position.

## Urban Youth and Alcohol Use

Some songs by Stunner make reference to Zimbabwean urban youth's consumption of alcohol. As discussed before Stunner seems to discourage alcohol intake by women and regards women who drink alcohol as imperfect. Interestingly, Stunner seems to glamourize the consumption of alcohol by young men, such as himself. In his songs, the consumption of alcohol is juxtaposed with one's economic success. For example, in "Live your life" he refers to a situation in which he's holding an alcoholic drink in one, a young woman in the other and in a third, symbolic hand, he is holding some cash. He sings: "*Ndakabata gas uku, ndakabata moko uku inini ruoko rwechi three ndakabata* cash". There is a suggestion that success and wealth are determinants of one's ability to consume alcohol. Noteworthy is the fact that the alcohol being referred to is not any kind of alcohol but the expensive brand. Thus, in "*Team hombe*" Stunner celebrates his rise to fortune and fame which has resulted in a shift "From *hwahwa hunodhaka takumwa hunonaka,*" which basically refers to a shift from cheap brands of alcohol to expensive ones.

It would be easy to criticise Stunner's representation of urban youth and alcohol use especially taking into cognisance the negative health implications of alcohol use. In Africa, the role of the artist is to heal society through his/her artistic expressions. Art should rectify society by pointing it in the right direction and the valorisation of alcohol inherent in Stunner's music betrays the role of the artist. This study recognises the importance of rebuilding societies through art but argues that the representation of alcohol use by Stunner can also be viewed in terms of it being an important identity statement that needs further deliberation. Stunner is giving alcohol a special status for communicating youth identity. Because alcohol is an indicator for success, it becomes a prop for staging the self in a performance of development. So for the youth alcohol consumption is sort of cool as it relates to and identifies with accomplishment.

## Urban Youth and the Celebration of Neighbourhood and Nation

Global Hip Hop culture is almost always about the celebration of roots in place, neighbourhood, home, family and nation (Mitchell: 1999). This celebration of roots is aptly depicted in some of Stunner's songs. The attachment to one's neighbourhood is closely linked to the deep seated yearning to fit in or to belong. In his songs Stunner makes use of local idioms and urban lingo that is common to Zimbabwean urban youth, this use of slang and urban lingo is a way of celebrating one's nationality. The song "Zimbabwe" shows the pride that one has in being Zimbabwean and in the song, Stunner openly calls for the youth to get involved in nation building. "*Mdara Banda*" also displays youths who are actively involved in the issues that affect their everyday lives. In the video we are presented with a group of youth in one of the high density suburbs of Harare who alert Mrs. Banda of her husband's sexual escapades with another woman. The youth join Mrs. Banda in confronting and shaming her husband and girlfriend. Although the video

is comic and playful, Stunner satirises the disease that has confronted contemporary Zimbabwe popularly known as "having a small house". Small houses are women who usually have long term affairs with married man. Given the background of HIV/AIDS which has a taken a toll on millions of Zimbabwean lives, the song becomes relevant as it shows that youth will not sit back while this disease ravages society. In "*Harare*", Stunner remains true to his society by portraying a realistic picture of life in Harare. Stavrias (2005) reasons that a hip hopper's identity is partially defined by representing where they are from. In the song, Stunner captures the commitment of urban youth to survival so much that they "do not sleep" looking for ways of improving their condition. However Stunner does not idealise his neighbourhood, instead he shows that urban youth's commitment to survival manifests in different ways and the strategies they use can both be progressive or aggressive. The song depicts youth in Harare who may resort to stealing and backstabbing in their quest for survival.

Noteworthy is the fact that the Zimbabwe that Stunner depicts in his songs might be a nation weighed down with socio-economic and political issues but it is far from the standard prescriptions of global media that represent Zimbabwe as nothing but a violent, diseased and impoverishes basket case. The Zimbabwe that he portrays is committed to rebuilding itself and its youth are active participants in recreating a better nation.

**Urban Youth, Hybridity and Multiplicity**

Nyanga et al (2011) posit that Zimbabwean youth identity is not homogenous, but there are multiple youth identities that are influenced by varied factors. A study of Stunner's representation of urban youth identity validates this point, the youths that he represents arise from multiplicity and dispersion (Mbembe: 1992). Because youth identity arises from multiplicity and dispersion it cannot help but be complex and contradictory. A comparison of the songs "*Rudo rwemari*" and "*Team hombe*" displays this fragmented consciousness that inheres in urban youth. In "*Rudo rwemari*" Stunner adopts a moralistic position that denounces and rejects a life that is driven by the love of money. However "*Team hombe*" echoes a conflicting tune as it openly embraces materialism and the culture of consuming. This dichotomy retells Mbembe's assumptions that the postcolonial present must valorise spaces of mixing, spaces where truth and authenticity move aside for ambiguity. Stunner and the youths that he represents are ultimately products of their time, they are post-colonial subjects and who suffer from what Gandhi (1998) refers to as post-colonial schizophrenia.

In the song "Godo" Stunner also demonstrates this split personality. He asks the question "*Chii chiri* better life or *hupenyu*?" (What is better 'life' or '*hupenyu'*). His position is that "Life" is better than "hupenyu" because although the two words mean the same thing, "life" has to be better as it signifies the civilisation and development of the English world while "hupenyu" is not preferable due to its ties to the backwardness of the Shona world. This contradiction is best explained by what Prakash (1995) regards as the enduring colonial hierarchies of the orient and the occident, the coloniser and the colonised, the civilised and primitive, the developed and developing. Stunner aptly shows the consequences of these colonial hierarchies by revealing urban youth who are negatively affected by cultural imperialism which dictates the superiority of the West.

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The song "*Hameno*" however confirms Stunner's conflicting ideology, in the song he questions why black people have a low self-esteem and prefer Western values, why they prefer to speak in foreign languages instead of upholding their indigenous languages. This conflicting ideology in the artist represents the oppositional and conflicting forces around the construction of urban youth identity. Youth are shaped by global and local influences and it is a challenge to try and honour both without ambiguity. Hip Hop emerges from complex cultural exchanges and larger social and political conditions of disillusionment and alienation (Williams: 2007), and within these complexities identities are never unified instead they become increasingly fragmented and fractured (Hall: 1997). The urban youth that Stunner represents arise from different, often intersecting, and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. Hip Hop as a youth movement is an important site for understanding youth who are under its influence. Stunner's music therefore reveals that Zimbabwean urban youth identity is complex and diverse and his music ultimately matches the intensity of these urban youth's lives.

Conclusion

The study analysed the representation of urban youth identity in selected songs by Stunner. The study reasons that there is a tendency to easily condemn Hip Hop as a negative influence on youth identity and the study appreciates the reasons for this criticism. However the paper has shown that there is need for reconsidering these basic conclusions about Hip Hop and youth identity because to disregard Hip Hop completely would be tantamount to masking a complex array of cultural forms and practices within Hip Hop. Morgan and Bennett (2011) argue that nations are using Hip Hop to see, hear, understand, serve and ultimately be transformed for the better by the brilliant and powerful young people. Thus Hip Hop can be a progressive force as it provides an important site for understanding youth, and hopefully to come up with solutions to better their condition.

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