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Abstract

Ghana (pronounced A-na) is a rhyming conversational music form created on the island country of Malta, a country situated between southern Italy and Northern Africa. Hip-Hop was birthed in black and Latino urban communities in New York, where street cultures were isolated from white neighborhoods. Hip-Hop has had an overwhelming influence on the Black American community, as well as the entire U.S. society. Over the past three decades, Hip-Hop has influenced and uplifted the world by speaking up for generations and providing the voice for a group of people trying to deliver a message. This thesis explores how artists on the island of Malta in the present day are combining these genres (Ghana and Hip-Hop), to use them as a social tool to impact music culture and democratic organization on the island. Furthermore, it delves into how the hybridity of Hip-Hop music and culture are used on the island as cultural markers to further the genre of Ghana for an entire new generation of citizens. Through my research I delve into their historical dynamics as I seek to understand the relationship between the two forms. This work is vital because the black voice and body have a complex relationship to popular culture and because black images have often been used in disparaging ways. My findings suggest Hip-Hop has provided a musical outlet for Pan Africanism and, at the same time, it has influenced Ghana. As I look into the cultural landscape of Malta, what becomes apparent is the dichotomic relationship of the culture to blackness and how that is expressed in its music. Looking at Maltese life through its musical expression is vital to the cultural and musical dialogue of the larger world.

Bidla: The Transnational Influence of American Hip-Hop on Ghana

by

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B.A., University of California, Davis, 2017

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts in

Pan African Studies.

Syracuse University

August 2020

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Chapter Overview

This thesis consists of an Introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and an accompanying film. The Introduction follows with a statement of the problem, affirming the need for the study, naming specific objectives, limitations, and assumptions. Following that is the Methodological Framework, Literature Review, and Theoretical Framework. Chapter I details the context and history of the traditional Maltese Folk Music, known as Għana. Chapter II details the methodology and procedures that were used in the study, including sampling, instrumentation, and analysis of data. The selection of oral interviews and songs is also discussed in this chapter. Chapter III contextualizes *Bidla: The Documentary Film* as a tool for my analysis of the study. The Conclusion provides a summary of my findings as a result of the study and it presents the conclusions that were drawn. Recommendations for future study of this topic are also presented in this section.

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Introduction

Atop the Mediterranean sits a jewel of land unlike any other. An archipelago where the spirit of tradition run rampant through the streets. Odes to the hopes and dreams of yesteryear are heard from the corners of stores, and the coves of beaches. Fears and hopes of a future are firmly planted in the whispers off rooftops and grounded in the footsteps of people flooding in and out of the city square of the capital, and they called this place, Malta.

I came to discover Malta in the summer of 2017, through a Fulbright Fellowship. My purpose for moving there was simple, I was an English teacher to Primary, Secondary and University Level students. However, the country's charm and music made me stay a while longer. Besides teaching, I was performing Spoken Word Poetry in and out of clubs and bars in the underground scenes in Malta. Through that, I discovered a group of Maltese musicians performing a one of a kind ballad and it was called, Ghana (pronounced A-na). Ghana at my first listen sounded like something I had never heard before; my ears were stunned hearing high pitched noises coming from these men's voices. As I saw them go back and forth with one another trading one high pitched verse, for another high-pitched verse I became intrigued at the synchronicity of it all. I asked locals and discovered this, Ghana is a rhyming conversational form of music in Malta and it was performed originally by women on rooftops to communicate to neighboring women. Contemporary Ghana is now performed exclusively by men and consists of either ballads or "completive arguments" sung by at least two men accompanied by guitar. I immediately connected the impromptu style of Ghana to battle rap. To my surprise, others in Malta had connected those dots too, and through some digging I discovered the quiet and humble whispers of the underground Hip-Hop community within Malta. Through that I discovered Hip-Hop artists on the Island who were combining the two genres, Ghana, and Hip-Hop, into a whole

new sound. It was then that the seeds of my research question were born: What is the influence of Hip-Hop on the Maltese folk music tradition called Għana?

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study that examines the research and discourse on Maltese Folk Music, Għana, and American Hip-Hop Music. My research focuses on the disciplines of Africana Studies to display the ways in which Hip-Hop has taken root in Maltese folk music. This research has deduced that this is a process that began in the 2000's decade including: appropriation, adaptation, and sampling. By looking at recent outputs and their associated contexts, this research also explores the ways in which Hip-Hop has earned its local specificities in Malta. This was achieved by combining and recontextualizing Pan African and Maltese elements and aesthetics in its performance and its identification in the context of its consumption as a cultural product. This analysis is extremely important due to the revival of Pan African analysis as exemplified within the work of William Nelson, Winston Van Horn and Nathaniel Norment Jr. All three scholars have contributed to this resurgence as each has tried to reposition the discussion of Pan African ideologies within Africana Studies literature. What makes this significant are the arguments they present, not only in the more recent calls for Pan African analysis but also in the call for "a form of analysis which is consistent with the goals and intentions of early Black Studies scholars who were concerned most fundamentally with a transformative educative process that had the ability to change the lives of African descended peoples." (Carroll,2017). For me it is this understanding of Pan African studies that informs my analysis of the methodology used within this research study. The perspective according to this understanding of Africana Studies is grounded in the Pan-African worldview. Generally speaking, "A worldview refers to the way in which a people make sense of their surroundings; make sense of life and of the universe," (Carroll,2017).

Scholar Mack Jones adds to this definition by stating that all “people have a worldview that is a product of [their] lived experience and that constitutes the lens through which the world of sense perceptions is reduced to described fact,”(Jones, 2014). Operating as a viewpoint, and as the most essential methodological framework within Pan African Studies, the African worldview can be used as a universal affiliation that African people share. This in no way suggests a monolithic means of interpretation, however it suggests that there are shared processes that Africans utilize in their struggles at understanding a reality. Extending that Pan African worldview into the topic of discussion, hybridity in music, this thesis will explore the hybridity of two music genres (one being Pan African i.e. Hip-Hop) and their fusion on the Island country of Malta. This section will scope out literature in this field to sketch out a picture of the research on traditional music and hybridity disciplines.

Hybridity

When looking at the results of colonization in the African diaspora globally in the latter half of the 20th century, we can safely say it changed the people who were colonized economically, socially, and politically. In addition, cultural alterations manifested themselves in literature, art, and music. When elements like these are brought, coerced, or submerged together, they may either repel, mingle, or do a dance of both. Therefore, examples of musical hybrids abound as the post-colonial period of history has come into fruition. The colonized and the colonists influenced one another. The diaspora of migrants contributes to the fusion of different cultures’ musical instruments, structures, and sounds (Nettl,1992).The result of the hybrid musical forms demonstrates a new world sound, “one that cannot be compartmentalized according to land, language, and political borders,”(Nettl,1992). Since the 1960s, hybridity constitutes a large facet of music, (Nettl,1992). The distance between the two ends of the

spectrum of hybridity flourishes with rhythms and new sounds that demonstrate the progress of people as they migrate and circulate across the man-made boundaries of countries, (Nettl,1992). In the Pan African context, one of the most famous case studies of comparative hybridity is, *The Hiplife*, by Dr. Halifu Osumare. *Hiplife* in Ghana explores a single international site -Ghana, West Africa- where Hip-Hop music and culture have, “morphed over two decades into the hiplife genre of world music,” (Osumare,2013). Osumare investigates hiplife music not merely as an imitation and adaptation of Hip-Hop, but as a reinvention of Ghana's century-old highlife popular music tradition. Osumare traces the process by which local hiplife artists have “evolved a five-phased indigenization process that has facilitated a youth-driven transformation of Ghanaian society,” (Osumare,2013). Osumare also reveals how Ghana's “social shifts, facilitated by hiplife, have occurred within the country's corporate recolonization,” (Osumare,2013). These things serve as an example of the neoliberal free market agenda as a new form of colonialism. Hiplife artists, we discover through Osumare’s research, are complicit with these global socio-economic forces even as they produce counter-narratives that drive aesthetic limits and challenge neoliberal order. Hybridity in every way takes place as a musical genre and its subsequent transformations. Hiplife music in Ghana is viewed through a prism of what Osumare has created the “arc of mutual inspiration,” (Osumare,2013) and provides one with a portrait of the complex connections between highlife, US Hip-Hop, late capitalism, youth agency, and local cultural practices. In this regard hiplife is not only an opening into a local music style organized by youth in Ghana but a standard through which central principles and global structural forces are simultaneously conformed with and resisted by those most affected by the challenges and prospects of economic and political developments of the twenty-first century. Today, it is very routine to mix different cultural elements and musical styles in a singular composition or musical

genre, and fusion music has been very popular and widely accepted. Since the younger generations have access at home or in hand to all types of music, newer popular music often replaces older popular music quickly, and everyone has distinct tastes and preferences. With this understanding musicians and scholars must be flexible and keep up with the current musical trends when working with newer populaces globally.

Globalization

Globalization can be perceived in numerous ways. Sociologist Anthony Giddens defined globalization as the, “intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away,” (Giddens, 2000). Here, value is on the integration of politics, economics, and similarities of global cultures. Scholar George Ritzer defined globalization as the, “spread of worldwide practices, relations, consciousness and organization of social life,” (Ritzer,1990). Globalization has also been defined “as a coalescence of varied transnational processes and domestics’ structures, allowing the economy, politics, culture and ideology of one country to penetrate another. The chain of causality runs from the spatial reorganization of production to international trade and to the integration of financial markets,” (Mittleman,1997). Globalization, thus, is a multi-dimensional procedure where cultural, economic, and political relations increasingly have a global foundation. It involves many vehicles that are contributory or are directly participants in the practice. The interactions between the forces of globalization and Pan African music reflects the multifaceted methods of implementation and adjustment by African musicians and their audiences. The pace of globalization and changes in “African popular music accelerated in the latter half of the 20th century due to changes in technology that allowed for more rapid movement of people and ideas,” (Carroll,2017). Scholars and artists often make a clear

distinction between traditional music and popular music but, the processes that lead to African musical expansion alter those lines by linking the “past to the present, merging African and non-African musical styles, and highlighting artists who reside in multiple localities and manage a mosaic of cultural resources in the age of globalization,” (Carroll,2017). Through my research I discovered that the globalization of African culture is cultural dominion expressing itself through the supremacy of the original indigenous culture both in its physical and non-physical forms by the foreign cultures. I believe that the process of globalization and hybridization has set off cross-global cultural exchanges of African practices and culture to many indigenous traditions and furthermore to the creation of music. This means that on the Island of Malta African influences have impacted local musical cultures, which have themselves evolved and emerged, having integrated both traditional and modern forms. One of these emergent forms in Malta is Hip-Hop music, which has become a locale for navigating identity and agency for youth, a demographic historically left out from power and participation. This has ultimately become hybridized with Maltese Folk Music, Ghana. Ultimately the product that has been produced is a musical *mélange* eengaging Hip-Hop and infusing their own indigenous music. It is a whole new form of music that includes impersonation-adaptation, engaging Hip-Hop as a socially viable vehicle for cultural movement. Scholar Peter Marsh looked at a similar movement involving more than four decades of popular music in Mongolia and focused on the rise of globally inspired Hip-Hop and rap music. Within this period Mongolian popular musicians found their own voice within a quickly expanding cultural mainstream. Hip-Hop emerged within the mainstream as both a product of these developments and the result of the rise of a new generation of young people who defined themselves as distinct from the older generations and used this music to declare this (Marsh,2010).

Methodological Framework

The concentration of my methodology is primarily directed toward vocal music, performance, and the analysis of songs. All these points concern the musical material culture, or to be more specific, the study of musical tools by means of which the music system is passed out. This involves the various kinds of techniques of performance, musical ranges, tones generated, and scales. It is important to note the problems of ownership, and the economics surrounding this. For example, in the last decade, Hip-Hop music has “followed the path of commercialization that destroyed African-American radio stations in the 1970s,” (Higgins, Dalton 2011). Whereas prior to commercialization, African American owners, programmers, and DJs had the “freedom to use their stations to serve the specific needs of their listeners — New York's working-class African American community,” (Higgins, Dalton 2011). This gave them the power to be able to publicize local artists and events and to address news events and social matters as members of the same community from which they drew their audience. However, as corporations owned by people outside of the community gained power by purchasing local stations, African American AM stations were “forced out of the market by more economically powerful stations owned and controlled mainly by members of the white upper-class,” (Higgins, Dalton 2011). African American DJs suffered the loss of their power as the modern-day gate keepers of their communities and as the anchors of Hip-Hop music and culture. Through this we saw a blatant shift of control of ownership. The second category of my methodology comprises the study of song texts, which was approached from several paths. Here we are dealing with text-melody relationships. The texts themselves reveal much about the culture of which they are all a part, in both Maltese and Black American communities. My study probes the text itself for investigation of behavior, linguistic usage, and the presence or absence of social commentary

regarding language behavior in song. Also, my study is directed toward what the text reflects, that is the prevalent character of the culture or of the value systems, in terms of both ideal and real behavior expressed in song. Finally, what is important is that texts reveal the history of a group, and the underlying motives which are often in no other way expressed but are deep-seated beliefs. The third category of my methodology consist of the categories of music. This was analyzed by the people themselves through their reactions to song. It is through this that I analyzed a recording both in controlled and in actual performance situations. The role and rank of musicians in the society of which they are a part shapes my fourth category of methodology. Here one sees the influences which shape one performing this type of music, who one is as a musician, attitudes toward the rest of the society and their mindsets toward the musician, and the ownership of music, whether by the musician or by others. In addition, I observed live performances to critique the musicians and analyze their behaviors. This is important as this type of analysis is truly cross-cultural in nature, and once established gives a great deal of information about cultural and socio-historical outlooks of the culture of music in these genres. My fifth category of methodology is documentary film. I produced, and directed, a cinematic documentary as a companion piece to this study. The film revolves around the real-time artists in Malta who are combining both genres, Ghana and Hip-Hop. Through this I was able to analyze their usage of the histories of both genres to real-time society. The use of film made it possible to observe several kinds of behaviors in connection with religion, dance, education, as well as economic and political structures through a visual lens. Through this methodological approach I was forced to move through the total culture in search of music relations, and, in a very real sense, find that music reflects the culture of which it is a part of. Through these methodological

approaches, I was able to examine music as an innovative cultural activity, through the processes of these expressions.

Literature Review

This section will present the theoretical frameworks of these genres of music (Ghana and Hip-Hop) and will then dig into their symbiotic relationships and their historical underpinnings. Each theory, ideology, approach, paradigm, perspective is a system of ideas, beliefs and values which present a trend or predict different variables. Discussion of these theories is essential to my topic because they allow me to create organized, connected explanations and forecasts by placing the intention and content of the research object in perspective.

Hip- Hop

Joseph K. Adjaye writes in, *Language, Rhythm and Sound: Black Popular Cultures Into the Twenty-first Century*, that Hip-Hop culture, which consists of “rap music, deejaying, breakdancing, and graffiti, has developed into one of the most influential social cultures in society today,” (Adjaye,1997). Hip-Hop recording artists sell millions of albums each year. Hip-Hop has inspired films, books, advertising, and fashion (Adjaye,1997). It has also had a strong impact on communication skills. Hip-Hop emerged in New York in the late 1970’s and was founded in the Bronx borough of New York City. The introduction of Hip-Hop during this era became a “turning point for African American culture as a whole,” (Adjaye,1997). According to Adjaye, Hip-Hop consists of four elements: (a) rap music, (b) deejaying, (c) breakdancing, and (d) graffiti art. The emergence of “rap music” was a turning point for music. “Rap music” consists of rhyming song lyrics accompanied by music. “Deejaying” involves playing two vinyl records along with the use of a sound mixer to mix the sounds of the two records. Breakdancing

is a form of dance that consists of complex floor spins and acrobatics (Adjaye,1997). Hip-Hop graffiti art consists of elaborate letter designs and murals that reflect the various aspects of Hip-Hop culture. Hip-Hop has an extensive array of words that are correlated with all the elements of the culture. Regional vernacular Hip-Hop's jargon has become prevalent; terms like, "flow" and "freestylin" are examples of unique words that gained instant popularity. "Flow" is used to characterize the creative energy that rap artists experience when performing (Adjaye,1997). "Freestyle," another important word in Hip-Hop culture, means performing an improvisational rap song that has not been previously written down. The rapper either "raps about their immediate environment or says whatever catchy phrases come to mind," (Adjaye,1997). From a regional perspective, freestyling is, very important on the East Coast and in the Southern part of the United States. The West Coast has a small subculture of its Hip-Hop community that embraces this practice, but the East and South are the most dominant. On the East Coast, some rappers describe a "freestyle" as a written rap that has never been recorded (Adjaye,1997). In the South, freestyling, also called "wreckin" has become so popular that complete "freestyle" CD's are circulated (Adjaye,1997). Freestyling is another indication of the high levels of innovation and aptitude that exist within Hip-Hop culture. Many "freestyles" are based upon witty metaphors and wordplay. The creativity is emphasized over the use of impromptu lyrics. The roots of Hip-Hop practices are wide-ranging and widespread. Because the creators of Hip-Hop are African American, African American philological practices have a strong influence on its language. Anthropologists have done vast studies on the linguistic practices among African Americans involving the use of rhymes and metaphors (Adjaye,1997). Adjaye concludes that, "the language of the urban Black community is the direct root of Hip-Hop linguistic practices," (Adjaye,1997). For example, African American church pastors have a huge impact on dialect.

This influence reaches many African Americans because of the “cultural significance of the church in the African American community,” (Adjaye,1997). Traditional African American ministers are animated speakers who use metaphor and rhyme with the utmost precision (Adjaye,1997). Civil rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson is a major example of this. He is known for his rhyming mantras such as “Down with dope, up with hope.” (Jackson,1979). These same habits are ever-present in the language of Hip-Hop. Boxer, Muhammad Ali, is another example of phonological influence because of his vast use of rhyme and sense of braggadocio (Adjayi,1997). His famous line, “float like a butterfly, sting like a bee,” (Ali,1971) can be likened to the way rappers use various rhymes and metaphors to depict themselves and their competence. With a following of this enormity, the language of Hip-Hop has established a strong hold in many global cultures. Independent research on Hip-Hop artists has produced clear evidence that Hip-Hop is an industry. The rapper today is not just a musician but a seller of products that influence youth all over the globe (Stoute,2012). When looking throughout Hip-Hop Literature we see the different avenues throughout which Hip-Hop has been exhibited through scholars and their work. To further the status of Hip-Hop as literature and literature practice many authors have tackled the genre. Adam Bradley develops the concepts of rhyme and verse in Hip-Hop in, *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip- Hop*, providing an in-depth analysis. He brings an understanding of poetic form and formal concepts to rap listeners who are interested in understanding the formal elements that make rap superb. In addition, David Toop’s, *The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip Hop* gives a critique upon his theories on the African Origins of rap Music rather than the commercial phenomenon that has become Hip-Hop. Toop covers legendary clubs such as the Danceteria, The Roxy, Audubon Ballroom as places for Hip-Hop making. In Christine Otten’s, *The Last Poets*, she bemoans on the original Last Poets

Group consisting of David Nelson, Gylan Kain and Adiodun Oyewole. Their spoken-word collective personified ideals of the Black Arts Movement like how Amiri Baraka made poems from the political realities and experiences of black people, the group performed verses about the spiritual and cultural liberation of black people. Otten shows the Last Poets whose performance styles and Afro-Diasporic musical roots provided access to a black aesthetic.

In terms of youth agency and black people's fight in the narratives of black culture we see this within Tricia Rose's, *Black Noise*. Rose provides a historical backdrop explaining the beginnings of the Hip-Hop domain and greater black culture. Rose paints the backdrop of postindustrial New York, influenced by the growth of multinational networks, technological insurgency, global economic competition and changing divisions of labor that prompted youth to respond to feelings of abandonment by their local government. It is important to note that youth culture is key in pushing this insurgency of Hip-Hop forward. Rose also writes how Hip-Hop functions within existing structures, that being mass media and the record corporations. Rose also notes how these mediums where rap music was displayed to show how mainstream America used this growing genre to criticize black culture. Another piece of Hip-Hop literature that grapples with agency of marginalized youth is, *Bomb the Suburbs: Graffiti, Race, Freight-Hopping and the Search for Hip-Hop's Moral Center* by William Upski Wimsatt. William's book is a collection of Hip-Hop articles written to defend and define a culture that was transitioning out of what was then a means of political statement into what was becoming the watered down commercial version of Hip-Hop culture we see today in the latter half of the 1990's onward. Wimsatt notes racial issues and discusses Hip-Hop as a genre of mobility that was stifled due to corporate interests. What is key about Wimsatt's analysis is it is driven by suburban development and the separation between classes. This plays into the overall disregard

for those who are living in between those margins. Wimsatt calls for a literal strike of the suburban lifestyle as it has shown to destroy, and degrade the culture created by those black youth who have created Hip-Hop.

Ghana

Ghana represents a history in Malta of over 100 years with recordings available in archives that date back to the 20th century. Today the only formal writing done on Ghana music is by Ranier Fsadni in 1989, "The Wounding Song: Honour, Politics and Rhetoric in Maltese Ghana" a textual analysis on Ghana music and the political and rhetorical structures surrounding the genre. Written in 1989 it describes the Folk Genre and the political nature of the music. Up until the 1960s, Ghana changed considerably as modern times progressed. Middle class people started, "realizing that Ghana was more folklore and not just singing songs by the lower class," (Fsadni, 1989). Since then Ghana became music for the popular events of the middle class. Ghana verses are represented by a mixture of Italian and Arabic ballads and tunes. As it pertains to today's world (21st century), the influence of the radio has made Ghana more widespread to new listeners. Informally, scholars have written about the newer sentiments of Ghana, that being authors: Manuel Casha, *Maltese Ghana and Prejjem Music: A Journey into Maltese Traditional Music Roots*. As well as Joseph Cassar-Pillicino and Charles Camilleri who write about it in, *Maltese Oral Poetry and Folk Music*. Their take looks at how new listeners to Ghana can hear ballads, laments, and satire, all about a changing society, while old lifestyles and values disappear. (Cassar, 1998). Also, these authors look at how the 21st century now has become a time where Maltese people have been emigrating to Australia, and Canada as they listened to Ghana recordings (Cassar, 1998). Like Hip Hop's changing face in a globalized world, Ghana was distributed to a changing social and political context.

Bidla

What new knowledge I bring to this discussion of both these genres through my work is the realization of a carved-out space that can be created between Hip-Hop and Ghana. To my knowledge no other documentary film work has been made contemplating these two genres and their combination on the island country of Malta or anywhere else globally. Through this film and written work, I contemplate the similarities between the two genres and see how they extend beyond technique. They are a discovery for souls mining the cultural past for liberation. Author Alejandro Nava describes soul, as a term that, “best represents the inner yearnings of the souls of black people, including both the desire to connect with the universal truths of existence and the gauntlet black people must navigate to get there with heart, mind, and blackness intact,” (Nava, 2017). Through looking at Hip-Hop’s lyrical hybridization with Ghana, Hip-Hop carries cultural resonance and specificity in Ghana’s art form. To understand Hip-Hop as a conduit for Pan Africanism it is necessary to look at it as the product of a set of historical, political, and economic circumstances and to study the role it has served as a voice for those subjugated by systemic political and economic oppression. This explanation plays an important role in the development of both genres of music. It is useful in guiding the practice of the expression of these two different music forms: Hip-Hop and Ghana. The development of Hip-Hop and Ghana has been an intertwined path of two different styles, which have grown from and have thrived, in similar circumstances. Just as Hip-Hop has cultivated advocacy to solve social, political, and economic problems, Ghana too, has become advocacy for social and political commentary. Through my research via film and written work I move toward a consideration of broader questions, not so much of definition of music styles but of an understanding of music as culture making.

Theoretical Framework

The basis for conceptualizing the influence of Hip-Hop on Ghana is to provide a deeper understanding of Hip-Hop's techniques and liberation practices worldwide. In addition, also to show Hip-Hop as a conduit for Pan Africanism on a global scale. To do this effectively, I used Alan Merriam's foundational model which focuses on three of music's concepts: behavior, concept and sound.

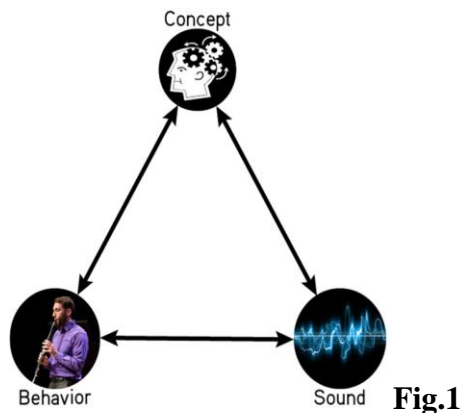


Fig.2

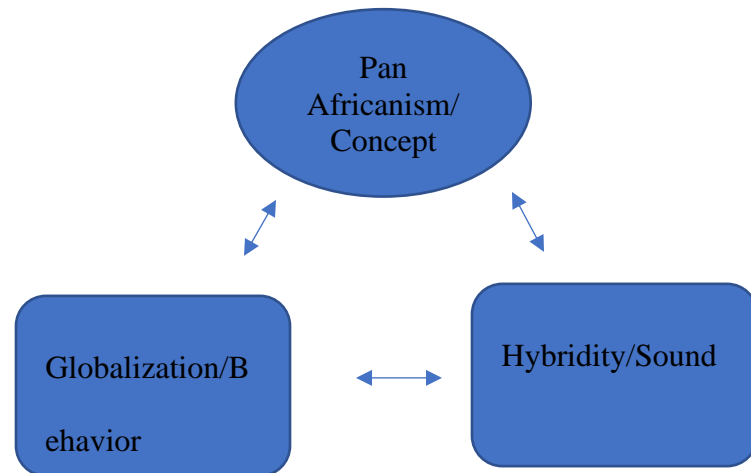


Figure 1 illustrates Alan Merriam's original theory of Ethnomusicology. This theoretical framework by Merriam still represents the underpinning of Ethnomusicology. (Merriam,1975).

Figure 2 illustrates my new paradigm, a reimagining of Merriam's model to represent the influence of ethnomusicological thinking on Hip-Hop and Ghana music.

These three models represent the concepts of my research directly correlating to:

Pan Africanism/Concept

Hybridity/Sound

Globalization/Behavior

My new paradigm illustrates the theoretical framework of the study and how Hip-Hop as a technique and liberation practice has influenced Ghana and the uses of music for understanding culture. When looking through this theoretical framework through my research, it is essential to discuss these theories regarding my topic as they are important to create organization. I conceptualize this to consist of three main parts: concepts, behaviors, and sounds. Individuals' perceptions of music determine their musical behavior which produces the musical sound.

The new knowledge I define through this theoretical framework creates a new direction for ethnomusicology as it affirms Hip-Hop as a technique and liberation practice that has influence that can be used for comprehending culture. I describe culture as the process by which we learn the ways of interpreting the world, from people in whose presence we are raised and live in. I see this as one way in which people construe their world. The conception of culture is tied to that of society. Each society has its own idiosyncratic culture, its own art, and its own music. People in society have guidelines that manage behavior toward what songs and what musical qualities belong to them, and they can distinguish others that they also know but do not allege. In large societies, limitations exist. However, in the modern world, you understand and digest not only your own culture, but a multiplicity of others. Music plays a huge role in defining your culture, and of interpreting the culture of others around you.

Limitations to Study

In relation to the discussions in this section, this thesis engages with the principles of knowledge and identity. With that, this study comes with a host of limitations. For example, the reviewed studies primarily focus on the current situation in Malta and explain the music's role in the present, giving only limited attention to the effects of this (temporary) African diasporic awareness. This also means that those on the Island of Malta that are part of the Pan African world are not effectively represented in the study due to the representations in Malta of Hip-Hop music being that of primarily white. The concepts of liberation through the Pan African artform of Hip-Hop are not fully represented through as liberation for Black people on the island are not yet fully realized. This is a question that will need to be addressed in the future as in a world characterized by migration, and transnational networks there will be a growing need for knowledge about identity in the African diaspora, including the role of music in this development. Increasing international migration makes it likely that new diasporic communities will be created, and old ones renewed, and more forms of musical hybridity will be made. Also, countries that previously welcomed and supported cultural diversity have now begun political and public discussions on the need for assimilation strategies for the future of identity. This new gaze in cultural understandings of integration will create a new set of circumstances for the shaping and regulation of Pan African diasporic culture all throughout countries. Another limitation to this study presented is the COVID-19 global health pandemic that has taken place during the writing of this thesis. Due to this being written during the semester of the pandemic, this limited the sources available to delve deeper into resources of connections of Hip-Hop and Ghana on the island.

Chapter 1: Ghana and its Conception

“Għana in three words? The word... melody... and expression.”

-Andrew Alamango, *Bidla*, (2020)

Malta has a proud, and culturally significant place in the history of folk music. Its music is called Għana and it can be both a joyous song and a fiercely political ballad. It is a genre that does not marsh itself down in the negative cultural aspects that a lot of the more recognizable forms of folk music tend to do but one that plays an integral part in everyday life.

Għana's origins can be traced back to the peasant farmers of the late 19th century, who, just like their North American and fellow European contemporaries, were searching for a way to pass time while farming the earth or tending to the trees. (Zahra,2006). These were often simple songs with improvised lyrics and filled with mostly regional slang about daily observations, frustrations and of course, the opposite sex. (Zahra,2006). Farmers would return to their villages after a day's work, gather in the town center and show off their lyrical masterpieces to one another. The next working day the previous day's song would be forgotten, and a new improvised one would take its place. (Zahra,2006). As the popularity of Għana grew in the regions, it was sung by everyone from farmers, to the innkeepers to women singing on roof tops, eateries, and communal wash houses. (Casha,2016).

“One could listen to Għana songs, accompanied by a guitar or accordion, sung by men and women on seacoasts and during popular feasts such as Lapsi. Youths used to sing Għana love songs in the open country, or the streets, or in houses during work time.” (Casha,2016).

By the late 1920s, Għana had grown and was causing quite the societal arouse. It now had an air of sophistication about it. Language was now Għana's main deterrent. The songs aroused the roots of Maltese poetry and literature, and, as a result, overseas recognition came in the form of crowded passenger ships hurtling toward Valletta from the Tunisian sphere.

(Zhara,2006). Soon, the streets of Valletta (Malta's capital) were swarming with Middle Eastern musicians eager for new sounds to take back home and gorge upon. (Zhara,2006). Prior too, Valletta's ethnic makeup was primarily white Europeans, this new influx of Middle Easterners caused great change in music. Music establishments in Valletta were now thriving businesses while fierce promoters of the local scene were championing the music as an unfolding phenomenon which would entertain the people for decades to come. (Zhara,2006).

Għana is a type of song with a slow rhythm. Għana can be both formal and informal in nature. Historian, Dr. Gorg Mifsud Chircop gives three concepts that define Għana; the Għanġiet or songs sung, the music played and the execution or performance thereof. Għannejja, would be described as Għana's gatekeepers, they keep the Maltese language alive singing in a highly expressive, free flowing style. Lastly the Għannej, the solo Għana singer. (Chircop,2014). Chircop says that Għana can be divided into several sub-genres. Għana tal-banju – bathhouse songs, is known as what many people would sing during work, for example while washing clothes in the bath, and therefore these songs were spread among the people orally (Mifsud-Chircop,2008). Today Għana tal-banju refers to traditional Għana which is known by heart. L-Għana Spirtu Pront is Għana which is improvised during the Għana session. It requires great skill and attention. Musician Karmnu Debono a.k.a. il-Pikipak says that, "when singing in this style the intention is that your verses open four windows for yourself but close all the windows for the other Għannej," (Chircop,2014). Spirtu Pront is a debate between two or more Għannejja on a topic, which could have been either predetermined or decided upon during the beginning of the session. A Għannej must demonstrate their knowledge not only of a wide range of social topics but also their command of the Maltese language. Singers must follow a rigid syllabic structure of

8, 7, 8, 7. (Chircop,2014). The language used during battles is full of metaphors and overtly pious stories.

Ghana Spirtu Pront is furthermore divided into other sub-genres such as. Bla Qalba, which means that one Ghannej would sing the whole song. (Chircop,2014). Dr Mifsud Chircop says that older Ghannej mention that this type of Ghana is not very old and goes against the very roots of Ghana Spirtu Pront. Another sub-genre of Spirtu Pront is Ghana Maqsuma (divided) this is Ghana where only two Ghannej participate. Moreover, there is Ghana Tal-kelma, which is based around a series of words which must be included in the song. (Chircop,2014). Musician Karmnu Debono suggested this type of Ghana started to be performed at the National Ghana Festival and in 2000 Ghanneja's Cikku Degiorgio and Kalcidon Vella a.k.a. id-Danny sang in this style for the first time overseas. (Chircop,2014). Another sub-genre is Ghana Bid-Denb, with a tail, as the name implies, is Ghana between two Ghannejja. Each Ghannejja starts their part by repeating the last verse of the previous Ghannejja. (Chircop,2014).

Another style of Ghana is Tal-Fatt. Ghana Tal-Fatt is prepared beforehand and is about facts which have truly happened, whether they be historic or current. These verses can be about a variety of subjects and are often published. (Chircop,2014). Finally, there is Ghana la Bormliza. Dr Mifsud Chircop made it his personal mission to make this type of Ghana, also known as Ghana fi-gholi (in a high pitch), more well known. In Bormliza singing male singers must reach very high pitches without letting their voices break into falsetto. This type of Ghana is generally sung in an intimate setting. (Chircop,2014).

Ghana can also sometimes be humorous in nature and this is known as Makjetta, (Chircop,2014). On the other side of the coin there is Ghana sung in churches, which is far more spiritual. Another type of Ghana is Id-Dwett, or duet. This Ghana is written and sung by two

people. The accompaniment to Ghana is provided by three guitars usually strumming Western influenced tonic to dominant chordal progressions. (Chircop,2014). This gives Ghana a very unusual sound, not quite Eastern, but not quite Western. In between sung verses, the next Ghannej is given time to prepare a reply to their opponents' retorts while the guitar player improvises melodies based on traditional Ghana melodies. However not all Ghana is competitive in nature, Noel Sammut is one of the present-day organizers of the widely known Ghana Festival, which is not a competitive environment. (Festivals Malta: Ghanafest,2014). The first National Ghana Folk Singing Festival was held in May 1998 at the Argotti Gardens in Floriana. (Festivals Malta: Ghanafest,2014). The festival was an immediate success with the participation of over 60 amateur musicians. The second edition in 1999 saw an even larger number of participants and included seven children participate. (Festivals Malta: Ghanafest,2014).

Citing Tourism and Culture Minister Francis Zammit Dimech's 2007 speech, Noel Sammut stated, "folk music, or Ghana, forms a part of folklore and tradition which gives us our identity and unites us with other Mediterranean countries which along the years developed this art of music and singing." (Chircop,2014). Cikku Degiorgio from Qormi, Malta is a renowned Ghannejja in the Spirtu Pront, and Bormliza styles. Degiorgio believes that Ghana is not something one can learn. "In the same way a person is born a concert pianist or a painter, a person can be born a Ghannej," (Chircop,2014). Degiorgio has been invited to speak about Ghana all throughout Europe. Degiorgio notes that rivalry between Ghannej is only natural and just makes the sessions more interesting. Sometimes Ghannej would shake hands with their opponent, like a sporting match, showing that what they are saying is only for entertainment and they do not mean any aggression.

Example of verses: Cikku Degiorgio

m int gejt gewwa dari

Biex titkellem xi ftit mieghi.

Jien l-ghana dejjem habbejtu

Inhossu l-hobby tieghi.

Today, you visited my home to

speak with me. I have always loved ghana,

in fact, I consider it my hobby. -Cikku Degiorio (Chircop,2014).

Ghannej Karmnu Debono discovered Ghana as a seven-year-old boy through his neighbor Guzeppi Xuereb known as, Ix-Xhudi, a well-known Ghannej who lived in Birkirkara, Malta in the parish of Saint Elena. Ix-Xhudi would often sing to Karmnu Debono and eventually started encouraging him to sing. (Chircop,2014).

Karmnu Debono has sung in a variety of Ghana styles. He enjoys the Spirtu Pront style and together with Frans Baldacchino a.k.a. il-Budaj, is a pioneer of Hrejjef (lies), which has its roots in Spirtu Pront. Some decades ago, il-Budaj and himself were on a program in Malta and Il-Pikipak challenged il-Budaj to a contest of lies. Basically, they were each to sing in the Spirtu Pront manner, however each Ghanejja had to contain a far-fetched, non-sensical lie. It went like this:

Darba ntlift id-dar fejn noqghod

Tani genn rasi ddur bija.

Wara gimgha qbizt mit-tieqa

U sibt ruhi go Sqallija.

Once upon a time, I got lost

in my own house and as a result I went insane.

After a week, I jumped out of the window and

I found myself in Sicily. -Karmnu Debono (Chircop,2014)

Karmnu Debono is adamant that Ghana is a natural talent. Unfortunately, today, many people consider themselves Ghannej but during this month of field research I have discovered a true one is hard to come by. In a lot of ways, Ghana is becoming an old relic of the past for many Maltese people. A changing face of an island reflecting a changing way of life. Some of the new Ghannej can be tenacious and proud, refusing to admit that they do not know an old Maltese word and preferring instead to tread on. Debono insists that true Ghana contains metaphors and words which may seem archaic. In fact, Karmenu Debono has Ghana songs about flowers found around Malta and about dusty shoes. (Chircop,2014).

Modern Ghana

The last decades (2000-2020) has been crucial in the history of Ghana. During the first part of twentieth century no one could imagine that Ghannej would be brought to the forefront of society as the Ghanafest was inaugurated by the Head of the State in Malta in 2006, as Ghana was designated as a historical and true music of Malta and highly conserved as an inalienable part of culture. (Zhara,2006).

Through research, I have seen some composers and musicians arrange famed Ghana melodies in various stages and recorded them, as well. Through this research I was able to see this through Hip-Hop artists on the island as they combined this centuries old art form with the Pan African stylings of Hip-Hop. Within the Pan African context there is a visibly new inundation of hybridization happening between this century's old genre, Ghana and newer genre, Hip-Hop. This new hybridity of music being offered by Maltese Hip-Hop artists is attempting to offer a whole new generation of listeners the ability to be exposed to a century's old genre. The

Pan African practice of Hip-Hop also is being used as a tool to enable and save precious history of Ghana development and keeping it for younger generation and fans.

When internalizing what the Pan African practice of Hip-Hop being merged with Ghana means, we can come to many conclusions. It can safely be said that folk music in Malta was heavily influenced by its geographical location. In fact, researchers state that Ghana is a combination of the famous Sicilian ballad mixed with Arabic tunes. In the old days, visitors to the Maltese islands used to comment that they were very impressed with the Maltese people's seemingly natural ability to sing and rhyme. (Zhara,2006). A close look at the lyrics will reveal that each song usually recounts great storytelling about life in the village or various important events in Maltese history.

When establishing the precedence of Ghana in Malta there is already a cultural underpinning of Pan African influence within its practice. Storytelling recounts back to the heart of the African oral tradition. The idea of this stems from the West African idea of Nommo, (Corfield,2010). In Malian Dogon cosmology, Nommo is the first human, a creation of the supreme deity, Amma, whose creative power lies in the generative property of the spoken word. These cultural underpinnings of Pan Africanism within Malta's tradition of Ghana are paramount to further analyzing this hybridization of Hip Hop that is occurring in present day.

Chapter 2: Movement, Reproduction and Hybridity of Cultural Signifiers in Hip-Hop

The Maltese Hip-Hop scene continues to remain underground, despite several talented individuals coming to the center stage. While Hip-Hop culture flourished in the USA in the latter half of the 1980's, the general Maltese public never grasped its core concepts. The term "Hip-Hop" is often incorrectly used as a reference to rap music. It has become an umbrella term used to describe a subculture packed with exciting forms of self-representation. These include, but are not limited to rap music, break dancing, graffiti writing and DJing. It undeniably is a lifestyle. It is also a mentality which originally upheld important values like education, and unity within a community. It has its own set of principles, style of clothing and terminology.

Malta's entrance to Hip-Hop is very recent. The island's rap and Hip-Hop pioneer is an artist named Hooligan, who made his debut on the local music scene in February 2003 with his album *Originali Bhali*, which was an immediate and huge hit. (Urry,2014). Tracks from the album shot to the top of radio and became a huge hit all over the island. Since then, he has performed in hundreds of musical events around Malta and Gozo (surrounding Island). Hooligan is a part of what is considered the vanguard of Hip-Hop in Malta, the first generation of MC's along with rappers such as Digby, No Bling Show and Rumbull. (Urry,2014). Unfortunately, as I observed during my field work, on the island there are no official gatherings for Hip-Hop fans. There are no clubs strictly dedicated to rap music. However, it is not uncommon to hear a rap song played in a nightclub, but that does not comprise much beyond mainstream beats. As I witnessed, Hip-Hop DJs in Malta are also a very rare breed, with very few available to speak to.

However, I discovered an emerging breed of artists on the island who have concocted a new brand of socially cognizant rap music. Rap group Marmalja is composed of two Maltese artists, Andrea Delicata (producer) and Claude Agius also known as Il-Lapes (MC). Il-Lapes has is also well noted on the island for his contribution to fellow rap group, No Bling Show.

Marmalja's music combines Ghana and Hip-Hop while having a look at the political climate of Malta. Their song, *Marija s-Sabiha* (2013) speaks on such through its lyrics, paying tribute to Ghana in its original concept. A twenty-minute music film goes along with the song as it tells the story of 'Marija l-Mostija' (Maria from Mosta). This song blends the production of Hip-Hop through rap lyrics with the dirge-like quality of Ghana all while crafting together the story of an innocent teenage girl raised in an orphanage, who falls in love with the grounds keeper. He convinces her that he is Christ, thereby worming his way into her heart and mind. Their love grows until Marija, now pregnant by him, discovers the full extent of treachery and learns just how unfair life is. The lyrics are as follows:

Il-passigġata waslithom fej' dis-sigra kbira Mari issa għajjena wara mixja twila. Taht is-sigra dina qagħdet mimduda fid-dell, Hemm mixhuta fuq l-art qalb il-ħdura tixgħel. Toni ra bħal qed jara id-deheb taht ix-xemx taralu ftit xagħar abjad ileqq. X'hin imtedd qal, "Int id-dijja msawwra ġo wiċċek Il-Mulej ordnali nieħu dil-mawra ġo ġismek... Mhux se twegġa'...", reġa' qallha, "Se tkun int li topponi ix-xewqa t'Alla?!" U Mari qagħdet, b'hekk il-pjan kien suċċcess U Toni ressaq idu lej' taht id-dublett.. The steps arrived at the great tree.

Mari now tired after a long walk. Under the tree she was lying in the shade, There is a cast on the earth to turn the green Toni, like watching gold under the sun of Taralua few white, bright hair. He said, "You have a Dijon in your face, The Lord ordained me to the

tour in your body...It will not hurt..., "Will you oppose God's desire?! " And Mari stayed, so the plan was successful

- Marmajla Marija s-Sabiha (2013)

Through looking at Marmajla's creation of hybridity through this song we see similarities as both Ghana and Hip- Hop carry cultural resonance and specificity in each other's art form. To understand this Pan Africanism characteristics taking place through this hybridity of genres it is necessary to see that the song serves as a voice for those subjugated by systemic political and economic oppression, a praxis well known in Hip-Hop. Anthropologist, Andrew Alamango states in *Bidla*,

"The music is language to the deep souls who seek recreation in the diversity of employment. it tells you about the poem of your life".

Andrew Alamango, *Bidla* (2020).

Some Maltese musicians interpret their "Poem of your life" as a link with their culture. Between the 20th and the 21st century the whole world started its evolution with new technology. As a result, the music followed its steps. In fact, without forgetting the importance of folk and popular music, new musicians have found their way to express themselves in new innovative ways.

One example of that is Rachelle Deguara, also known as REA, a Maltese artist who likes to popularize Ghana with Hip-Hop. Known widely on the island as a Ghannej-rapper. Her work with Ghana builds upon the works of people since 2004 with the likes of Ruben Zahra, Steve Borg, Guzi Gatt and Andrew Alamango who built old instruments and searched melodies,

rhythms and musical text forgotten in the old Ghana archives. Their songs combined a hybrid of Arabian melody with Ghana as a basis of West European harmony. (Zahra,2006). These songs would combine different types of instruments: from clarinet, violin piano to electric guitar and drum kit. These variations bring a dynamic quality because they include parts of rock with parts of folk music. REA brings together these instrumentations and combines them into a mix of production with Hip-Hop. The Hip-Hop scene captured her attention in the late 2000's decade when Missy Elliot was on the rise. From a young age she was exposed to Ghana and felt that rap was the contemporary art form of Ghana with the advantage of possibly putting in more words to add to the duration of a song.

“The lyrics of Hip-Hop and Ghana, they hold.... Lyrical value, that's why I saw it necessary to fuse the two.”

Rachelle Deguara Bidla (2020)

The Antiquity of Hip-Hop

Almost fifty years after its founding, Hip-Hop is considered a truly global phenomenon that combines elements of homogeneity with local symbols and expressions regarding musical forms, lyrics, performances, and social content. It can be said that within the US context, Hip-Hop emerged during the 1970's as an African American subculture. However, from its very beginning Hip-Hop has been a highly transcultural and hybrid phenomenon that integrates various musical elements and forms of cultural expression. In addition to African American popular culture, for example, “Caribbean and Latin American music styles, language and dance played a vital role in the formation and development of Hip-Hop on both coasts of the US,” (Serrano,2015). The muddle of diverse cultures and diasporas that have been present for the

evolution of Hip-Hop as a musical genre and as a movement, in the urban locales of New York and Los Angeles, for example, heartens us to think of these diverse musical, cultural, and social traits in more fluid or hybrid terms. Furthermore, diasporic identity in the multicultural neighborhoods where Hip-Hop first emerged is also fluid regarding the interaction between diasporic perimeters and their centers of origin.

Hip-Hop is described as the “artistic placement of oral rhymes over musical beats by keeping up opposite word order,” (Farley,1999). It gave Black American people a voice to convey their message to the world in fashion. While rap's history appears brief, its relation to the African oral tradition, which provides rap with much of its current social significance, also roots rap in a “long-standing history of oral historians, lyrical fetishism, and political advocacy,” (Adjaye,1997). As stated in Chapter 1, at the heart of the African oral tradition is the West African idea of Nommo. In Malian Dogon cosmology, Nommo is the first human, a creation of the supreme deity, Amma, whose creative power lies in the generative property of the spoken word. As a philosophical concept, Nommo is the animative ability of words and the delivery of words to act upon objects, giving life. The significance of Nommo in the African oral tradition has given power to rappers and rap music within many African American communities, (Corfield,2010).

Hip-Hop’s deep-rooted ideas made it possible to be met with open arms globally. Hip-Hop has maintained consistency across cultures and regions. (Kenon,2011). Through this we can look at Hip-Hop as a conduit for Pan Africanism and explore the dichotomic relationship to blackness in the world and how that functions through the music being made through it and with it.

Ghana and Hip-Hop Hybridity

One thing unique to Hip-Hop is its reflection on the unique importance of space and identity. From its very inception in New York City, representing one's neighborhood at battles was a central part of the culture. When Los Angeles became the center of gangster rap in the late 1980s, African American and Latino rap artists highlighted the intermingling of Hip-Hop with gang culture on the West Coast (Hebdige, 1987). The East Coast/West Coast feud in the mid-1990s, pointed to the smash of geographical and musical spaces when negotiating spatial identities and relationships. (Hebdige, 1987). Thus, in its myriad forms and expressions in the US and around the globe, Hip-Hop holds very "powerful ties to place," (Lidskog, 2016). These ties are present and reflected by MC's names, languages and local slang as well as in references to specific geographical markers and signature musical styles of a particular locality. (Lidskog, 2016). This is like Ghannej in Malta, where one's locale tells a narrative and music style is represented through that. Through this we see a marker of common issues of marginalization and contested localities being negotiated by both Ghana and Hip-Hop. What these place-identities tell us about the political, socio-geographic, and cultural context in which Hip-Hop culture is produced is poignant throughout Ghana.

Take this untitled, collaborative track by Maltese MC's Kapitlu Tlettax, FishCult and Sirius Furban, for example. As soon as the music video starts with a protagonist walking in the hauntingly beautiful Addolorata Cemetery and he utters the words:

*Għad inkun mejjet u tiġi fi kliemi,
dawq qalhom nannuwi ftit qabel ħallieni
I am still dead and come in my words,*

those who have been very little before

I am still dead and come in my words,

those who have been very little before

-Kapitlu Tlettax, FishCult and Sirius Furban- “Untitled Track” (2018)

This track is referring to the neighborhood wars in Mosta, Malta between Catholics and Christian young men.

This research culminated in one last example of this hybridity through an artist named Buzu, a rapper on the island who mixes Ghana and Hip-Hop to speak on the changing face of the island and what the future holds for the Native Maltese who live on it. The track which also serves as soundtrack for the film *Bidla*, is entitled, Bzonn Bidla (Lord Give Me Light).

mulej tini d-dawl qed nama mhux nara bla tema ta tama

hadd jitloba ghalija alavolja insara kull ma nisma paroli

kull ma nara hsara kull zball jiswa oli

aktar ma nzid fl-eta alla mana kif insejt

tiftakar x jghidula dik il-haga?

Lord give me the light im going blind

no theme of hope no one praying for me

even though we are all Catholics all I hear is cheap talk

all I see is damage mistakes cost more

the older I get god damn, I forgot,

what was that thing called?

[Everyone knows the night of Ghana] -Buzu – Bzonn Bidla (2020)

Through this song we can see how this hybridity of Pan Africanism infused with indigenous language/music can serve as a space and practice that binds a message together. A space, place, and language are created so that one can understand themselves as belonging to it. Through this music hybridity we see how ties are made: emotional, and social ones develop, implying the construction and representation of a social identity and a social memory where individuals across diasporas are connected.

Chapter 3: *Bidla*: Documentary Film

“The music, it’s like someone hugging my heart... the music it is part of the inheritance... a part of the culture.”

Rachelle Deguara *Bidla* 2020

A line said by Rachelle Deguara, also known as REA, as we stand outside Ta' Ganna Bar, a bar in Zejtun, Malta. Ta' Ganna is one of the only bars left in Malta that religiously still observes playing Għana music every Sunday for the local Ghannej to come, listen and perform. *Bidla* means "change" in Maltese, as the film quite literally explores the music change of Għana and Hip-Hop on the Mediterranean Island through the lens of Hip-Hop artists and cultural anthropologists in present day. Rachelle is special not only in the fact that she is one of the main characters of *Bidla*, but she is one of the few young people on the Island that wants to still inherit the spirit of Għana. Għana in present day is an intricate part of an older generation. Rachelle was introduced to Għana in childhood as she recounts in the film. It was not a fad for her, but it was something that found her. She realized during her teenage years, the similarities between Għana and Hip-Hop and wanted to use Hip-Hop as a medium to push forward Għana to a new generation. She realized both genres lyrical value and realized that people in her age group would love the mixture. She since has performed on the island for the past five years combining Għana and Hip-Hop in a way that was unheard of. Creating events around it, making stories around it, making music around it has propelled her and her work into a different stratosphere.

When documenting the portrait of Hip-Hop in Malta it is important to remember their trajectory has happened a tad bit late. The aesthetic, production appropriation as captured through this film is only up to the American Hip-Hop culture of the mid to late 1990's. This documentary covers four subjects of both music genres, Għana and Hip-Hop. Rachelle Deguara (rapper, activist) Andrea Delicati (rapper/ producer), Ranier Fsadni (cultural anthropologist) and

Andrew Alamango (Ethnomusicologist and musician). The documentary film looks at the fusion of these two forms through these characters to display exactly how it is occurring. The narrative told in this documentary seeks to show visually and auditorily the usage of specific characteristics to uncover the African identity being told through music being made in Malta. To tell the story through documentary is of the utmost importance as the existence of this form of media dates to the birth of visual art. Until the recent growth in digital technology, cinema was mostly created by professional filmmakers, who approached arguments through a visual medium to achieve what documentary pioneer John Grierson described as “the creative treatment of actuality” (Ellis,2000). Yet in recent years the development of cell phones and editing equipment has made it possible for amateur filmmakers, to craft films with the same efficiency and quality of those who have come before. This section explores this in conjunction with the work of the written thesis and the documentary film, *Bidla*.

***Bidla*: A Visual and Sound Narrative**

Visuals have great power. They tap on that part of our brain that works silently in the background of our waking moments. It manages what we see and conjures emotion. Likewise, the nuances in speech, words, and tone, hit us very deep. Navigating the world, we are constantly hit with a fusillade of information that becomes the fabric for our sense of being. Over the shooting period of one month, this film encompasses live performance, interview, song production and recovery of archival footage. The usage of these mediums over any other prove paramount to the success of this film. Gunther Kress, in “English at the Crossroads,” claims that “the visual is taking over many of the functions of written language” and that “this shift may lead to a fundamental challenge to the form which is perhaps most typical of speech, namely narrative, and its replacement by the visual/spatial display.” (Hawisher,1999). Since the process

of film screening requires subconscious brain activity, viewers are more likely to remember information they process through a visual medium. To truly represent the music of Malta and its combination with Hip-Hop the visual aesthetics represent a time shown through the lens of both new and old. The film begins with an Introduction of Malta, showing recovered archival footage of a scenic shot of the island above, displaying the island and its topographical contents. We see an archipelago that sits still, frozen in time. Then with brief adjustments to the film, we see interplays to scenes of labour and work. We see people as they toil away in the fields, working domestic day laborer jobs, cutting fish on boards, winding rope for a sailboat. All to the tune of REA -Nieklu N-Natura (eating nature) 2019. A song that speaks to the ills that construction has brought to the island and what is at stake for the island as capitalism has entered, as old traditions are now becoming less and less and being replaced with new modes of the future. Here we see this juxtaposition of the two modes being used. The visual of archival footage of Malta being used as old mentality vs the new mentality layered on top by REA's Hip-Hop song. What this does for the viewer of the film is bring about the strategic nature ultimately the artists are trying to do through their work. This changing face of the island is a battle between preserving what is left or creating a new wave for the future. As we dive into the film, we get a deeper dive into REA as we follow her into the bar in Zejtun, in which the Ghannej are performing Ghana. We are left with music playing as she states, how she has found a way to make Ghana live in the modern world. We then follow REA to a new location, a park in Zejtun nearby where she grew up. She begins her interview explaining her touch on her new version of Ghana.

Jesse Schell, a video game designer and CEO of Schell Games, said that “sound is what truly convinces the mind it is in a place; in other words, ‘hearing is believing,” (Muncatchy,2018). This quote perfectly demonstrates the importance of music in this film.

Without the music in a film, the film would be much less convincing. It should be noted that all music in this film is that of live performance, fully mastered songs, and archival audios that have been restored.

As the film progresses, we are taken to a scene with the producer and other half of rap duo Marmalja, Andrea Delicata. Marmalja is a rapping and producer duo on the island who mix Ghana with Hip-Hop. Andrea describes what Malta and mixing the two genres means to him and why Hip-Hop is the form he has chosen. As the intricate melodies of Ghana and Rap play in the background, the laments of Ghana flow as the screen turns black. The sound of the clock in the main square of Valletta rings and musician Andrew Alamango welcomes us to the oldest record store in the world, D'amato Records. As he tells us the history of D'amato as we interview there, the camera pans the shop walls of all the old records all to the tune of Tony Camilleri u l-Bambinu. Andrew places a needle atop the record on the Crosby player and the melody of old Ghana tunes begin to play. This music, it tells a very intricate story. As it plays, on the screen we look at archival photos of old Ghannejs in and out of Malta. These pictures and music play a sound of an old past trying to be held onto. A course of history that may be fading away. "We are afraid Ghana will die, if it dies, we don't want to die with it," (Bidla, 2020). Andrew states this as the music fades out and the screen turns to black as we near the end of the film.

Above the many things that stand out in this film is music. It is unquestionably necessary for an array of reasons. When relating it back to the Pan African consciousness, Black people in the United States have used music to reflect their conditions since enslavement. It is proof that we have been talking about how problematic this system has been for Black people, long before White America finally took notice. The music, Hip-Hop, as utilized, provides snapshots of experience at each cross-section of time - just like the archival images Andrew shows us in

D'amato record shop, just like the interviews, just like the videos. We use music to tell our stories. Music provides an important, necessary, and vital piece to this documentary.

Although the use of film to convey information has been frequently explored by academics, the educational value of filmmaking has received less attention. Since the viewing of a video allows for the increased retention of information, the ability to capture the inner workings of artistry and rhyme and verse through film helps adjust the viewer to the hybridity world. This film was directed, produced, written, and scored by me. The narrative brought to the film through visual and audio is an event in it of itself. We see aspects of not only the music and hybridization of African culture and techniques, but we see this as well through the aesthetics of the film. Within the stylized aspects of the characters in the film we see a posturing. Scenes in the film specifically show this posture as the ones that are surrounded by the parallel nature between the Ghannej and the MC. We see the moves of the Hip-Hop artist as one like the Ghannej. The film depicts this showing myself as well as the Maltese Rap Artist Buzu. As the screen splits, we see Buzu and myself rapping as juxtaposed to the Ghannej, as they are rhyming and rapping impromptu and physically moving the body to the lyrics. This juxtaposition brings to the forefront this concept of hybridization within the visual aspect of these genres. This allows for the music not only to be heard but also seen. The primary difference between conventional projects and this project is the strong emphasis on the visual and audio of the film, which helps to strengthen the central argument. *Bidla*, offers an effective combination of audio and visuals that establish a rich perspective of a newfound story.

We must realize the capabilities and possibilities of film have reached new heights, the sharing and reach for new technology is one that is in a completely different realm. An essay by Elizabeth Coffman, "Documentary and Collaboration," further details the growth of non-fiction

filmmaking collectives in America, Coffman notes how “much of the world has gained access to lower-cost video equipment,” and the Internet has prompted the growth of cinematic communities in which socially committed groups use film to address social issues which may be too regional or subversive in nature to be presented in monoform media. Each cinematic representation of reality, whether presented as a documentary or on the nightly news, features subjective choices in which the camera placement, editing, commentary, and other elements shape a version of reality. (Coffman,2009). Coffman addresses not only how the cost of production has declined, but also how the problem of distribution has been resolved by websites like YouTube. The relatively unregulated space of the internet opens the possibility for alternative perspectives that stand in opposition to those presented in media outlets like televised journalism and narrative cinema. For the most part coverage of real-world events by news channels may promote alternative perspectives but given that those news outlets are owned by major corporations their information will almost always reflect a white gaze. The power of the new age documentary films dictates a different type of film to be made. With this new age format, the power of black cinema is vital as this film was made for the purpose of culture redefining rather than commercial gain. Through this, myself as the filmmaker is much less restricted in my choice of topics and personal perspectives, while also addressing pertinent local or regional issues which escape the lens of mainstream media.

Black Narratives within White Spaces

One of the most significant principles established by *Bidla* is the exploration of how the characteristics that bring identity to the African diaspora have been appropriated to help bring solidarity within the films characters’ community and bring their national indigenous language/ history forward. There is a place where the documentary forms as “the creative treatment of

actuality,” (Coffman,2009), which holds that the subjective presence of the filmmaker is as important as the information presented. As a black woman navigating this primarily white space, the thread of the black narrative was something ever present. Through the multiple subjects of the documentary I discovered, there was a need to tell the truth if the film is to maintain integrity. However, people telling their stories are vehicles for self-expression. The documentary’s purpose is not to coldly convey historical facts, but to offer a viewpoint on real-world events with a goal of fostering community among those who watch it.

Hip-Hop emerged in the US to bring attention to important social issues within the Black community. It was the music that helped characterize a transformation in race relations. It was a way to survive a world where discrimination, and notions of inferiority were still a reality even though the Civil Rights Movement was legislatively successful.

In the case of Malta, undoubtedly Hip-Hop functions in direct opposition of the US Hip-Hop narrative. Within the film as we see REA proclaim, Hip-Hop came through the form of MTV entering the island. The narrative of Hip-Hop in Malta is one of cultural appropriation driven by the capitalist machine and notions of color-blind ideology. Simona Hill and Dave Ramsaran in their research about Hip-Hop and Inequality, constructed a term: “consensual domination,” where the dominant culture takes away the subculture’s ability to say “no” to domination by allying with key players from any particular subculture in order to embed submission into the culture’s identity. Consent is “manufactured” rather than forced (Hill Simona J, 2009). In our color-blind, capitalist society, Hip-Hop in a predominantly white space like Malta is serving as a capitalist venture to keep the dominant culture dominant. This is specifically pervasive through its combination with Ghana. Scholar Adriana Clay makes the connection of Hip-Hop being used as a force and vehicle. (Randall,2017). Africans truly achieve

Pan Africanism, connecting that and achieving that in their own culture and communities. The ideal concepts of Pan Africanism surround Blacks helping to liberate other people. This framework has helped set the foundation for others seeking solidarity within their own communities. (Jung,2014). With Hip-Hop ,in the case of *Bidla*, there is a clear decisive motive in using Hip-Hop on the Island. This is seen through the creation of hybridity with Ghana and Hip-Hop, in which it is helping to bring forward a generation of past identity forward. In the film it is clear the presence of the African Diaspora is not acknowledged within these spaces as these artists fuse Hip-Hop with their indigenous language to create a new sense of identity and traction for social development. Since the purpose of documentary is to express a viewpoint, to use rhetorical appeals to foster identification among viewers on a specific topic, the demands of objectivity placed on myself as the filmmaker did not extend to the subjects. The danger, of this hybridity we see pop up everywhere and very much the limitations of this overall study is the inherent failure and refusal to truly understand the context of Hip-Hop and Ghana as a Pan African pursuit by Maltese people. Rap music and Hip-Hop culture provides comfortable, immediate access to the Black Diaspora community to those who might be significantly removed either socially, geographically or in this case, both. Maltese artists manage to withstand a safe gap from the actual culture from which the genre was birthed. Striking a balance between taking part of a culture that did not originate from your community and colonizing that culture can be very problematic. There is a very clear-cut distinction between “paying respect” to something you admire and culturally appropriating that thing. This act of paying respect and homage becomes cultural appropriation when a dominant culture attempts to take a subgroup entirely for their own devices, leaving nothing for their own culture. Wanting to take part in a culture that does not originate to you can be valid and necessary to fully understanding other human beings

and create a more congenial society. However, this becomes highly difficult when there is no attempt to understand others and instead, cultural distinction is considered profitable. This is how stereotypes evolve from benevolent to something much more atrocious. Where a human is no longer a human, but rather a set of preconceived notions that help enforce the dominant culture's superiority.

Conclusion

As shown in this thesis, music plays a lively part in social life and cultural experience. It can be a means for individual or community self-understanding, political mobilization, for strengthening a group's cultural individuality, and for reinforcing boundaries between groups. Through my Theoretical framework, which reshaped Merriam Allen's Foundational Model of Ethnomusicology to include a new lens three-pronged placement of:

Africanism/Concept,

Hybridity/Sound

Globalization/Behavior. Overall, each mode has an overarching theme: displaced control. It is important to recognize this because music provides cultural hubs and expressive practices that, consciously and unconsciously, are used by individuals and groups to understand themselves and their place in the world. To understand this better, we must further break that down and understand how this relates to the structure of our social relations. Music in every way works performatively: the past is not only remembered but it is also reinvented, time and time again. We see this with both Ghana and Hip-Hop. With both genres there is a diasporic consciousness that functions as both a resource and a constraint in the social positioning of these two genres and the groups that practice them.

To consider the impact in the *mélange* of musical pairings when looking at Ghana and Hip-Hop, there is value in targeting liberation as stated in Chapter 2. In the context of US Hip-Hop, many scholars argue that Hip-Hop should be understood about its African American “centrality” (Adjaye, 2007). While I do not argue this, I ask how can we better understand the hybridity of Pan African music and culture, both at its point of origin, and as a global phenomenon? Furthermore, how do other minority groups and diasporas draw upon African American cultural indicators to validate their contributions to the genre? In doing so it is only

logical that identity and authenticity will be challenged and extended over time. This is case and point with Ghana and Hip-Hop. To denote, what is implicitly explicit is the construct of African origins in music, i.e. Ghana, yet its little to no acknowledgement.

In an era of globalization, one way of understanding the myriad creations of hybrid identity constructions in Hip-Hop is to identify and unpack the facsimile and merging of cultural signifiers, be they musical, visual, linguistic, or otherwise. As an aside for future research, I will further elaborate on which cultural symbols are (re-)produced in a context, and how do local or national cultural forms interact with transnational and global cultural flows? Finally, for minority groups forming themselves in different diasporic contexts, what is their relationship with their homelands and how do they shape their newly formed transcultural dynamics of centers of Hip-Hop production?

These dynamics become more complex through their interaction with identity since too often, history does not include the experiences and cultural expressions of women, black peoples, disabled, and others who have been less dominant.

Cultural incursion explains how dominant groups or classes impose their “own view of the world” (Jones,2014) on those who are not in power. In relation to the discussion in this section, this thesis engages with the politics of culture to gauge the nature of what is considered as proper culture, the link between control and power. How does culture reflect and strengthen hegemonic structures of power? However, this research primarily focuses on the current situation and explains the music's role in the present, giving only limited attention to the consequences of this (temporary) diasporic consciousness.

Music is a part of culture and is important for individual and social identity formation. As stated in Chapter 2, It can serve as a space and practice that binds group members together, so

that they understand themselves as belonging to each other and maybe even having a specific task or mission to accomplish. Through musicking, emotional, social, and cognitive ties can develop, implying the construction and enactment of a social identity and a social memory where the individual and social are linked. (Lidskog,2016). Music can be used as an emblematic identifier of a social group, both by the group's members but also by the surroundings. Music not only functions to express and maintain pre-existing identities, it also provides resources for contesting and negotiating identities and constructing new ones (Jung, 2014). Due to globalization processes, with surges of concepts, people, and materials, hybridizations are continuously arising between cultures. Individuals and groups must respond and connect to new practices, and it will become increasingly challenging to speak of static cultures. This especially applies to music, where the global spread of musical genres provides prospects for musical hybridity.

To sum up, music provides an opportunity for the expression of identity, as with the case of Hip-Hop's influence on Ghana, we see how it can facilitate the propagation and revolution of established social identities, i.e. the Pan African one. Music provides a unique space for a community to renegotiate and rebuild its identity repeatedly. And may we see through the folklore, for making music the best place to meet and learn from each other.

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Vita

Amanda Eke is a Nigerian American Artist, Filmmaker and Scholar. Born and raised in Sacramento, California she is a graduate of University of California Davis. She is a Fulbright Award winner and author, and uses both her love for writing and music to address socio-political issues, and contemporary culture prevalent in society today through her art. Amanda has lived and worked with young adults in Malta, United States and Nigeria teaching writing and poetry. She has created and held Spoken Word-Workshops worldwide. She completed her Masters in Pan African Studies in August 2020.