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Voicing sentiments of resilience: A corpus approach to 1980s conscious rappers in South Africa

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Authors:
Pedro Álvarez-Mosquera[1,2]
Pejamauro T. Visagie[3]

Affiliations:
[1]Department of English Philology, Faculty of Philology, University of Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain

[2]Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, School of Arts, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

[3]Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Pedro Álvarez-Mosquera,
pedro@usal.es

The study of people's response to adversity acquires substantially different connotations in the South African context because of the heavy legacy of apartheid. This article explores the construction of the notion of resilience through the oral narrative production of the most prominent conscious rappers that emerged in the 1980s in South Africa, namely *Prophets of Da City* and *Black Noise*. By means of a corpus approach, our analysis with *AntConc* revealed that *resilience* is intrinsically connected to the historical sociopolitical struggle of the black group. In building this notion, results show how the parallel emergence of an oppressive *other*, the white group, plays a fundamental role. Relevant to our study, the affirmation of their black identity appears to act as an effective way of underpinning their possibility of *resurgence*. Furthermore, the objective analysis of rappers' linguistic choices in their lyrics underlines their strategic use of personal pronouns, ethnic labels and other contextual-loaded terms whilst conveying their messages and communicating with their audience. These results both demonstrate the contribution of rap music in construction of a specific notion of resilience and highlight the effectiveness of this methodological approach, opening the floor to comparative studies.

Keywords: resilience; conscious rap; South Africa; corpus; 1980s.

Introduction[1]

In general terms, *resilience* can be understood as the ability to recover from or adjust to adversities or changes (ed. Fraile-Marcos 2019). This concept has been explored across various distinct disciplines and from a wide range of academic approaches. Experts from different domains have underlined the many dimensions of this complex sociocultural construct depending on the context (see Southwick et al. 2014). Because of the intrinsic connection between multiple determiners of resilience and how they configure the individual's experience in a particular context, authors have often captured this complexity to different degrees. Hirsch (2014), in her introduction to the 2014 MLA convention dedicated to *vulnerability*, encouraged scholars to mobilise textual, historical, theoretical and activist work in order to 'shape conversations about broad social and political problems'. Whilst visual arts and literary and non-literary written works have often been used to study the expression of resilience through the lens of a particular individual or community, this article aims to do so through the lyrics of *conscious* South African rappers who emerged in the last decade of the apartheid era.

The use of music and lyrics as a source of data in the linguistics field has not been uncommon in the last few decades (Best & Keller 1999; Newman 2005; Nishina 2017; Williams & Stroud 2014). Similarly, corpus-based approaches have also gained academic attention in recent years (Álvarez-Mosquera 2012; Condit-Schultz 2016; Gianfelice, Pessoa & Gomes 2020; Verbeke 2016). In the case of rap music, a significant amount of research has been conducted as this genre has been progressively adopted by many distinct communities across the globe. Despite having evolved into a contemporary worldwide phenomenon, the African-American origins of rap music and hip-hop culture are still solidly connected to what Smitherman (2000) defined as the *Black Oral Tradition* taken by slaves from Africa to America. Within this genre, the rapper represents 'a post-modern *African griot*, the verbally gifted storyteller and cultural historian in traditional African society' (Smitherman 2000:269). As rap music started to spread internationally and *returned* to Africa, we can envision rappers as relevant social channellers of sentiments and narratives of resilience in that they could give voice to the reality in their communities. In this regard, just like African griots, rappers would be also linguistically competent and lyrically skilled witnesses of the events that affect their communities; and witty transmitters of enlightenment and truth

1. Corpus-based studies typically use descriptive statistics, including frequency count, percentages or normalised frequency, to analyse large corpora. Because of the strict research criteria and the limited number of well-established South African rappers in the '80s, the size of the corpus imposed some analytical limitations. Hence, reviewers have suggested using *stylometric* analysis or *stylistics* as an alternative description of our approach.

which often act as an instrument to facilitate radical and ideological social change (Baker 1993; Costello & Wallace 1990; Haupt 2001). Well-known rappers, the likes of Tupac, Public Enemy and Immortal Technique, have frequently defended the role of rap as a fundamental weapon to denounce social injustices affecting their communities, whilst other authors have even claimed that 'rappers were now being asked not just to be mirrors to the people, but to be their leaders' (Chang 2005:274; see also Hill & Petchauer 2013). This is an ideal that is frequently expressed by some of South Africa's foremost hip-hop academics and artistic activists (artivists), and by many distinct hip-hop ambassadors in general – emanating from a fundamental element that is deemed by hip hoppers as the core of the culture, which is the *Knowledge of Self* (Clark 2018; Haupt 2003). Hence, artivists such as Emile YX? (from *Black Noise* [*BN*]) and KRS ONE have taken the initiative to broaden the leadership capacity of their hip-hop endeavours from merely the production of music to producing various forms of literature (see KRS ONE 2009; Moses 2019) and enacting a more practical and sustainable influence through utilising hip hop as an instrument of social transformation, with particular focus on individuals who find themselves to be marginalised by some means.

From a linguistic viewpoint, rappers' language choices – as with any other speaker – are never neutral but the result of a number of sociolinguistic, cultural and contextual factors. Relevant to this study, Alim (2006:12) defined hip hop as cultural practice embedded in the lived experiences of these individuals in a home, street, hood, city, state, country, continent and even hemisphere. Far from being an exaggeration, this reflection captures defining features of the oral production of many rappers, ranging from morphological variation or lexical differences to specific degrees of code-switching (amongst other features), which are used in their depiction of social issues contained in the lyrics (see Álvarez-Mosquera 2015). As the title suggests, this study focusses on the raps of the most prominent South African *conscious rappers*[2] who started their professional or public activity during the last decade of the apartheid period in South Africa (1980's [hereafter referred to as '80s]). The initial intent with this research study was to source music from five different artists – with 10 songs per artist (see the section '*Methodology*' for further details).

However, because of the vast underdevelopment of the culture of hip hop in the 1980s – particularly in South Africa – the availability of music and artists was relatively restricted. During this period, rap artists were frequently impeded by many different factors, consisting of statutory prohibitions as well as insufficiencies in financial and marketing resources (Haupt 2001). With this focus, we expect to find evidence that explains and illustrates the different expressions of the notion of resilience as the rappers' artistic and linguistic production is inextricably linked with the sociopolitical circumstances

2.In general terms, *conscious rap* is defined as a subgenre of hip hop that focusses on creating awareness and defending knowledge as an effective tool for social transformation (Adaso 2018; Hill & Petchauer 2013; Mohammed-Akinyela 2012).

that permeated and surrounded their communities and their intrinsic selves during this critical historical period, taking into account that *resilience* offers an opportunity to assess and address sociopolitical transformation, revolt and renewal (O'Brien 2015:193; see also Gianfelice et al. 2020).

Apartheid in South Africa represented a systematic categorisation and segregation of the population in order to maintain the privileges and the power in the possession of the white population exclusively. Legislation became an imperative tool to guarantee this superior status. The *Population Registration Act* of 1950 required that all South Africans be categorised and registered in accordance with their racial profile as part of the system of apartheid. The decision of the *Office for Race Classification* determined each individuals' social and political rights, educational opportunities and economic status, amongst other social factors (Posel 2001).

This was particularly vital in places such as Cape Town (where the selected rappers originated from), because of the diverse sociocultural origins of many city dwellers in this era (Trotter 2013:49–78). For instance, central areas of Cape Town were designated *white suburbs* by national legislation, and coloured and black populations were removed and forced to settle on what became known as the *Cape Flats*. In an attempt to illustrate the oppressive dynamics of this and other South African cities, we can highlight that people of colour were requested to carry a pass – giving them permission to stay in the city, and were forced to leave if they were not working. The co-occurrence of protests and other forms of sociopolitical resistance were constant throughout this period, and casualties accumulated in Cape Town and other townships across the country. These internal conflicts throughout the country, together with increasing international pressure, led to a number of superficial reforms and less strict segregation policies in areas such as sporting and leisure activities in the mid-'70s (Bickford-Smith 1995). This limited integration faced resistance from students, trade unions and religious groups, amongst other institutions during the next decade.

Although a great degree of structural violence and repression was normalised during this era, anti-apartheid movements gained strength during the '80s as they engaged citizens across all racial groups, professions, political and religious backgrounds. This included Pan-Africanist movements within the diaspora as well as African-American academics, politicians and activists (Appiah 1992). Whilst these humanitarian activists were one of the main revolutionary forces, music and African artists were also involved in the process of raising awareness, motivating and mobilising people for the cause of resilience and solidarity against different forms of injustices and trauma. However, 'critical references to apartheid in Afrocentric Hip Hop remained few and far between' (Dara 2018:31). With the arrival of democracy in 1994, the sociopolitical situation changed radically and relevant contextual clues might have played a central role in determining the social perspective of new

generations of South African artists (including rappers) who will be the subject of this and future comparative studies.

Departing from the previous discussion, this article represents the first phase of a three-stage diachronic approach to the study of the notion of resilience that will encompass the '80s, '90s and '00s. More specifically, in these pages we analyse the oral production of the most prominent South African rappers that emerged during the '80s era in order to explore the notion of resilience through the lens of this genre (see the section '*Methodology*'). In line with this introduction, Afrocentric or socioculturally and politically inclined hip-hop music produced prior to the mid-'90s in South Africa also often labelled as *conscious rap* and characterised by its capacity to capture the experience of the community in a particular sociocultural and political context. Therefore, our design aims to study, both quantitatively and qualitatively, how possible sentiments and narratives of resilience have been conceptualised and transmitted to their audience under the specific context of the last decade of this regime and beyond. In other words, the data for our corpus analysis comprise a collection of productions created by the most prominent hip-hop groups in South Africa who had their origin or debut in the '80s era.

However, it is logically impractical to enforce any chronological barrier to the analysis of their artistic production. Therefore, in addition to their early origins, the criteria for the selection of these artists also considered the sociocultural and political awareness expressed in their work as well as the period during which their music had prominent influence and mass-scale reception within the local community (see the next section).

Methodology
Criteria for corpus compilation

In order to meet our research goals, a number of methodological challenges needed to be addressed. The most important one was concerned with the limited number of well-established South African rappers during this era that could meet the criteria for selection. Rap music, as we know it today, originated in New York City during the '70s, as one of the five primary elements of the broader hip-hop culture, and it slowly gained commercial appeal throughout the '80s, reaching mainstream international markets – of which South Africa was no exception. As anticipated earlier, because of the many censorship regulations and restrictions of the apartheid regime, we cannot speak about a normal emergence and subsequent development of South African rap music (Haupt 2001:174). This had important methodological implications for the design of our corpus. In an attempt to illustrate how the notion of resilience could have been captured in this genre, we initially searched for at least five rappers who maintained a reasonably wide audience base, were well-recognised during this specific point in history and displayed constant social, cultural and political awareness in their music since the '80s.

The number of choices fulfilling our criteria were quite limited; however, we identified two rap crews – *Prophets of Da City* (*POC*) and *BN* – that had an outstanding production according to the provided criteria. Ergo, rap music content from these two groups was selected for the metafunctional analysis of resilience in the context of early hip hop in South Africa (see Table 1).

Sociolinguistic profile

Sociolinguistic profiles of *POC* and *BN* are important to contextualise our results. Both of these hip-hop crews originated from the Cape Flats in Cape Town; a fact that brings their shared sociopolitical standing, ethnicity and language into the forefront. Because of historical reasons, Cape Town presents the largest concentration of *coloureds*[3], a term used to refer to people partly descended from European settlers, but largely from Cape slaves – the indigenous Khoisan population, and other people of African and Asian (mostly Malay) origin who had been assimilated to the Cape colonial society by the late 19th century (Adhikari 2005a:1, 2009; Thutloa & Huddlestone 2011). From a linguistic viewpoint, their vernacular language has received an increasing degree of academic attention. McCormick (2002a; see also Dyers 2015) described it as all non-standard, distinct local usages of the mixed-code (Afrikaans and English[4]) spoken in these communities as individuals presented different degrees of command for each of them. This local variety contains distinctive lexical, semantic and grammatical features (see Hendricks 2017). What is central to underline in this approach is the fact that the use of this vernacular as well as different degrees of code-switching, was (and still is) predominant within the coloured communities as it has symbolic and solidarity value, significant to group authenticity (Williams 2016). This serves to assist in keeping both standardised versions, 'pure English' and '*suiwer* [pure] Afrikaans' out of the context of any casual or informal interaction (McCormick 2002b:123), underlining its profound identity implications.

Having this in mind, we need to understand the oral production of the vocalists of *POC* and *BN* as that of young coloured men acting as community leaders and advocates for social rights. With a great degree of street credibility and popularity, *BN* and *POC* are credited with being pioneers of Cape Town's (and South Africa's) *conscious* hip-hop scene during the mid-to-late-'80s (Haupt 2001, 2003; Phakathi 2019). Their linguistic choices might then appear central in the configuration of their social reputation and the construction of their sociopolitical stance (Williams 2016).

Procedure

Following the selection criteria, a South African member of the research team, from the same sociolinguistic background

3. The use of ethnic labels, such as the term *coloured*, continues to be very controversial in the South African context. Whilst there are diverging attitudes towards its usage amongst members of this community (Adhikari 2009), this term has been widely used in the academic field for a number of reasons, including keeping track of the social demographics.

4. These vernacular varieties often include linguistic elements of other South African languages (e.g. Nguni languages) in coloured communities outside of Cape Town.

as the selected rappers and highly familiarised and integrated with the local hip-hop scene, acted as a transcriber of the 20 selected tracks, as their lyrics were mostly not available in any textual format.

Songs were selected according to their sociopolitical nature (same thematic domain). Transcriptions were revised by independent researchers so as to avoid possible misrepresentations of the lyrics and other unintentional errors. In order to compile the '80s corpus, both sets of tracks (10 for each artist) were combined in a single .txt document for their subsequent analysis with *AntConc* (version 3.5.7) – a computer software program that gathers a collection of corpus linguistics tools for identifying language patterns (see Table 1).

With the intention to capture only the words uttered by the rappers and avoid distortions in the analysis because of the frequent repetition of words, we have removed all the technical words (e.g. title, album, artist, etc.) and the choruses have only been taken into account once.

From a linguistic point of view, we would like to highlight that it has been our intention to keep the transcriptions as close as possible to the original words uttered by the rappers. This includes the use of peripheral normativity (Blommaert et al. 2005) – code-switching or code-mixing and sections in Afrikaaps or *Kaaps*, the language variety of Afrikaans spoken by the rappers. In this regard, whilst English is the predominant language used by these vocalists, 6.78% of the corpus falls into the spectrum of Afrikaans or *Kaaps*.[5]

The last step of our methodological approach consisted of processing the resulting 10 000+ word corpus through *AntConc* in order to objectively study the construction of the notion of resilience in this genre during the '80s period and beyond. More specifically, we used the *Word List* tool to create word lists ordered alphabetically and by frequency, along with other statistical information. This tool effectively contributed to investigating the construction of the notion of resilience through the use of different terminology and discursive strategies (see the section 'Results'). Additionally, the *Concordance* tool was used to study the semantic context of specific lexical terms related to the field of *resilience* in order to strengthen our analysis.

Finally, from a methodological viewpoint, it is important to note that we added a *Stoplist* containing 41 grammatical words (e.g. the, a, to, of), which were removed from our analysis as a result of their high index of frequency and their low relevance for our study. This facilitated the interpretation of our results.

TABLE 1: Composition of '80s rappers' corpus (South Africa).

South African rappers ('80s)	*Prophets of Da City*	*Black Noise*
Number of tracks	10	10
Words	4992	5050
Total	**10 042**	

5.Total number of Afrikaans or *Kaaps*: 681 (*BN*: 232 words; *POC*: 449 words).

Results

Focussing on the outputs of this methodological approach, the top 25 most repeated words in the '80s rappers' corpus obtained with *Word List* in *AntConc* show a predominance of potentially relevant words related to the construction of the notion of resilience. More specifically, a dichotomy of *I/we* versus *you/they* is clearly established – *I* (262 repetitions), *we* (98 repetitions) and other first personal references (e.g. *my* or *me*) as opposed to references to a third party by means of *you* (193 repetitions), *they* (61 repetitions) and others (e.g. *your*).

Whilst more detailed information will be provided later, it is worth pointing out that, in parallel to this primary opposition, a second dichotomy emerges amongst the very few content words in this top list: *black* (88 repetitions) versus *white* (33 repetitions).

In order to explore the possible interrelation between two opposing categories, the *Concordance* tool becomes useful for the analysis of the context around these terms. As we expected, the word *I* (the most repeated word) can be the subject of many sentences that are unrelated to the notion of resilience (e.g. 'I can see clearly now; I learn from hip-hop'). However, the analysis with *Concordance* helped us see that a significant part of the over 250 first personal references (135/262)[6] is, in fact, a way of personifying resilience-related facts. A collection of instances which illustrate the acknowledgement of going through a *struggle*, hardships and even complications for their aspirations are shown (Table 2). In addition, the analysis of this personal pronoun within the scope of resilience reveals that it is also effectively used to reinforce central aspects in the construction of personal and communal identity, revolving around the notion of *belonging*.

TABLE 2: Instances of *I* capturing the notion of *struggle* (100 cases) and *belonging* (35 cases).

The case of *I* and *struggle*	The case of *I* and *belonging*
'**I** dedicate this to those who were down with the **struggle**'	'**I** am, proud of (proud of) **Africa** and being **black**'
'**I** am me because of who **sacrificed** before'	'They label us as "Coloureds", but I know **I'm a black man**'
'It happened a long time, and **I** never will **forget**'	'**I** transmit **from the Bush,**[7] like an umbilical cord'
'And **I** cannot take it **no more**'	'**I'm proud** to say that I am part of **a black race**'
'Yoh! **I** wanna be **free**. You wanna be **free**'	'**I'm goin'** back to my **roots**'
'Yeah, **I** was born, raised and **brainwashed** in South Africa'	'**I've** grown up searching for heroes in my **community**'
'**I** felt **roughness**, 'cause **I** was programmed or Meant to believe **I** was **no man**'	'Because **I'm Black** to the bone'
'Forced removals is how **I** ended up here … **Bulldozed**'	'**I** reside **south** side of the equata'

6.A total of 106 cases of *I* were classified as unrelated to the notion of resilience. The remaining 19 cases were not included in our analysis as researchers either disagree or consider them ambiguous instances.

7.The term has its origin in apartheid jargon, where the geographical area referred to as the Cape Flats area was nicknamed the *Bush* (see also San people). Examples of the use of this term amongst popular culture are common in the area, including the oldest community radio station *Bush Radio*.

TABLE 3: Selection of instances of *we* with *struggle* (45 cases) or *belonging* implications (19 cases).

The use of *we*	
'That **we** gave up heaven and earth, and now **we** living in **hell**'	Struggle
'**We** hate where they put **us**; our subconscious knows'	Struggle
'**We** run, duck and dive to avoid **detention**'	Struggle
'**Uprooted** from our land and homes that **we** chose'	Struggle
'**Power** to the people. **We**, the people make it through'	Community or belonging
'About South Africa. Yes, **we** had this [brother] **history**'	Community or belonging
'**We** choose to learn of our **Black ancestry**'	Community or belonging
'**Black people** like you and me, who were searching for who's **we** be'	Community or belonging

In a context of oppression, reclaiming and defending their African roots (e.g. 'I am, proud of (proud of) Africa and being black; I've grown up searching for heroes in my community') (Table 2) are not only a way to strengthen their identity but they, as perceived members of the *coloured* group, literally reject this label imposed by the regime (e.g. 'They label us as "Coloureds", but I know I'm a black man'). This strong identification or affiliation with the black community remains constant with the use of other first personal references (e.g. *my* and *me*) and it becomes even more evident with the use of *we*. *We* (98 repetitions) is used purposely to both reinforce the idea of community (19 cases) and narrate their struggle in the country (45 cases).

As shown (Table 3), *we*[8] encapsulates the group experience underlying central aspects of the notion of resilience by means of denouncing their current situation and underlining their identity, aspirations, endurance and resistance. As shown multiple times throughout the corpus (e.g. 'we hate where they put us'), this collective experience is because of the existence of *they* (the *other*). The construction of the concept of *otherness* can be seen through the examples (Table 4). In these instances, the antagonism *us* or *I* versus *them* becomes clear. In an attempt to disentangle this relationship, we examine the *Word List* of *they* (61 repetitions). Notably, data show that most instances of *they* are explicitly or implicitly connected to the *white group* (49/60) and this *other* is often depicted with negative characteristics[9] (30/49). Thus, the clear instances of the associations between *they* and *white* are presented (Table 4).

As we can see (Table 4), *they* can be very often easily tracked to the white group by means of historical or contextual references (e.g. 'With the Bible and the gun they kill us in Jesus name'). Therefore, the construction of this *other* is not restricted to the use of *they* as this pronoun can be simply replaced by the target group. Therefore, instances of the direct association between the white group or other social sectors or forces controlled by this group (e.g. police,

8. In the case of *us* (33), 11 cases were used for similar purposes.

9. None of the 49 references to *they* as *white* were classified as positive. As noted earlier, 30 instances were clearly negative, whilst 19 were considered as unrelated (not positive nor negative) and 6 were found unclear or ambiguous. Only six cases of *they* referred to the black group.

TABLE 4: Instances of *they* with negative implications (30 cases) and *they* associated to the *white group*.

The use of *they* as a negative *other*	Associating *they* and *white*
'**They**'re coming at me in a **Casspir**[10]'	'(Fuck the **police**!) If **they** can't respect **me**'
'Everyday **I** kept on strong. What **they** did was also **wrong**'	'**Politician** endorses**, they**'ve become causeless'
'But **they** tried to **kill** away every little black in me'	'And how much longer must **I** suffer for the **White** man's sin?'
'"Stop Hotnot[11]!" 'till they scream'	'**They** tried to wash **my** brain with a **white** man's ancestry'
'With the **Bible** and the **gun they** kill **us** in Jesus name'	'**I** don't celebrate **Krugersday**[12]'
'**They** taught **us** our ways in a **foreign tongue**'	'**I** dare to say, **Western civilization** is uncultured'
'So **they** McDonald **me**; and tell **me** that I'm gonna **be sorry**'	'Remove **our humanity**, so **white supremacy kills**'
'**They** don't give a damn about you. All **they** want is **your place**'	'When **we** still have the **White man** telling us what to do?'
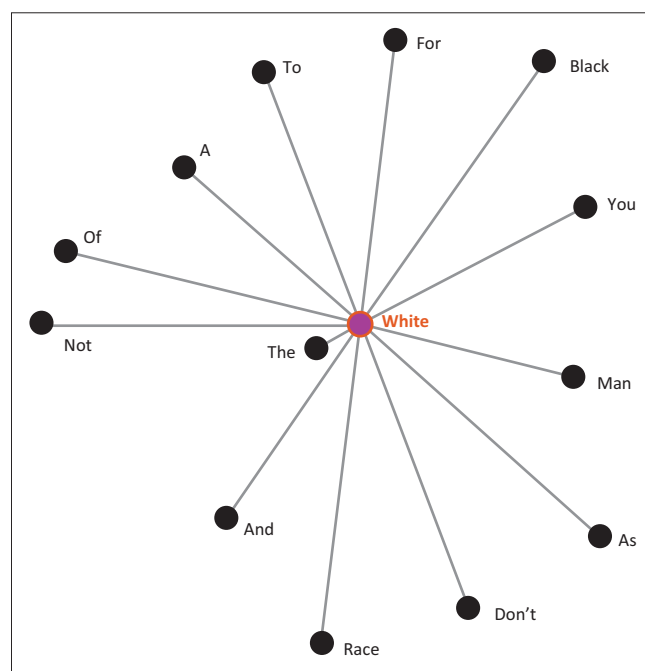
FIGURE 1: Network of linguistic collocations for *white* (GraphColl, Lancsbox).

religion, language), acting as agents of oppression for the native communities, are not exceptional. In building this notion of *otherness*, it is important to note that the term *white* has been used 33 times (including lemmas).

In an attempt to delve deeper into the construction of *whiteness*, the following graph (see Figure 1) generated with *Lancsbox* (version 4.0), a software package specialised in the analysis of language data and corpora, reveals that *white* collocates with *black*, *you*, *race* and *man* (distance: 5L/5R). The closer the word *white* is to a collocate, the stronger the relationship is (higher frequency of co-occurrence). On the basis of these data, the racial antagonism between the white and black man is also numerically and graphically validated.

10. The Casspir is a *Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle* that has been in use in South Africa to transport troops.

11. A derogatory word used for coloured people in the Western Cape who have profound Khoisan ethnic genealogy.

12. Idea of Paul Kruger, former prime minister of one of the South African colonies, as a white icon.

The oppressive ideological behaviour of the white group is often identified as the source of black group's anger and the main cause of their past and current struggles (Table 4 and Figure 1). Besides using *they* in their discursive strategy to construct this *other*, this ethnic group is either targeted directly or under other iconic or alternative labels (e.g. 'I don't celebrate Krugersday I dare to say; Western civilization is uncultured'). Relevant to our approach, a few examples (Table 4) establish a direct correspondence between the two initial dichotomies detected amongst the most repeated terms (see Table 1), that is, *us* versus *them* and *black* versus *white*. This is the case of, for example, 'When we still have the White man telling us what to do?' or 'White man have powah. Black haffi' suffer'. This is visually observable too (Figure 1).

By keeping the same approach, it is then worth exploring how the term *black* (105 repetitions, including lemmas) has been used in this corpus in order to construct the notion of *I/we*.

Similar to the case of *white*, this ethnic group is also targeted under alternative labels to refer to the whole community including *black people, black race, blackness, the black man*, amongst others. Unlike the term *white*, which presents negative characteristics associated with oppression and rejection (*otherness*), *black* (or blackness) displays positive identity connotations associated to a group that is in fact struggling on multiple social levels. Examples of these positive features are clearly captured in instances such as '*Jesus and Buddha are black gods*' or '*Black race was civilized before the albino birth*'. In fact, the rappers also show a certain degree of agency or willingness to strengthen their association with blackness as can be seen in 'We choose to learn of our Black ancestry' or 'I'm proud to say that I am part of a black race' (see Table 5).

In establishing or reinforcing a cause-effect relationship between the black group's situation (*I/we*) and the interference of the white group (*them*), the term *black* is often contextualised in a complicated social scenario that implies a high social cost: 'And when Black people had to walk around with a pass' (authority's control over freedom of movement during apartheid); 'One of many who died in the black man's strife' (repression); 'The media plays it out, 'cause it's black-on-black killing' (media manipulation); 'We've completed our schooling. Or should I call it "black-fooling?"' (brainwashing). Within this multilayered complex sense of struggle, there are instances of a deeper internal struggle that revolve around the concept of blackness within the coloured group. This debate ranges from the genetic to the social level:

> But the Black gene is dominant, and therefore I'm Black, see?; But still Coloured and Blacks don't mix with one another […] Then **we** will both realize that **we** are both **black** or Educate with self-hatred. Our **blackness** was destroyed. (See section 'On the coloured label')

TABLE 5: Selection of instances on the multilayered construction of *black* (105 cases).

Associating *I/we* and *black*	
'Jesus and Buddha are **black gods**, yes'	Positive connotations
'**We** choose to learn of our **Black** ancestry'	Positive connotations
'**Black race** was civilized before the albino birth'	Positive connotations
'I'm proud to say that **I** am part of a **black race**'	Positive connotations
'And when **Black people** had to walk around with a pass[13]'	Social cost
'One of many who died in the **black man's** strife'	Social cost
'**We**'ve completed our schooling. Or should I call it "**black-fooling?**"'	Social cost
'The **media** plays it out, 'cause it's **black-on-black killing**'	Social cost
'**Black people** like **you** and **me**, who were searching for who's we be'	Internal struggle
'But still Coloured and Blacks don't mix with one another […] Then **we** will both realize that **we** are both **black**'	Internal struggle
'But the Black gene is dominant, and therefore **I**'m **Black**, see?'	Internal struggle
'Educate with self-hatred. **Our blackness** was destroyed'	Internal struggle

FIGURE 2: Network of linguistic collocations for *black* (GraphColl, Lancsbox).

On studying the linguistic collocations for *black*, the graph obtained with *Lancsbox* (distance: 5L/5R) (Figure 2) displays a wider range of collocates. In line with our previous analysis, *black* is strongly associated with *people* and *man*; terms which underline the variety of labels to refer to themselves. Aspects of in-group identification are detected in the association with *I*, *our*, *me* or *being* or even *history*. Results (Figure 2) also highlight the idea of racial antagonism as the word *white* and *they* also co-occur frequently around the term *black*.

The case of you

The use of *you* (193 repetitions) differs from *we* and *they* in that the interlocutor might be the rappers' community (*we*) or the *other*. In this regard, direct appellations or allusions to the target group by means of the second personal pronoun *you* evokes an asynchronous conversation that strengthens the effects of the rappers' intentions. In our analysis, we found that *you* was associated with the black

group in 108 cases, including instances of *belonging* (10) and *struggle* (38). Cases of *you* clearly referring to the white group added up to 70, and only 15 instances remained unclear. A similar distribution was found for *your* (54 repetitions) in that a higher number of instances were addressed to the black group (35; 4 for *belonging* and 10 for *struggle*) and fewer cases were associated with a white interlocutor (19). In line with previous sections, rappers' direct appellations to the white group tend to underline its negative characteristics or traits because of its direct involvement in the socially complex situation of the black group (e.g. 'Did you ever stop to ask yourself do we need your civilization?'). When *you* is used to address the black masses, direct commands to reinforce their identity (e.g. 'Black people like you and me, who were searching for who's we be') and warnings to generate a reflection around their current situation in society (e.g. 'Who taught you to hate yourself?') tend to be predominant in the rappers' discursive strategy.

On the coloured label: A case of a particular struggle

Given the fact that both rap crews would be broadly associated with the coloured group within the South African context and also because of the high number of ethnic labels in their corpus, searching for direct references to this group might help disentangle the construction of these racial categories. The word *coloured* presented a relatively low frequency (seven repetitions). In our analysis, being coloured represents an additional source of struggle for these rappers. They attack the use of this ethnic label imposed by the apartheid regime by underlining its artificiality (e.g. 'Genetically there's no such thing as a White or coloured race') and its dividing nature ('Making "Coloureds" understand the Blacks. What a hell of a chance. Educate with self-hatred. Our blackness was destroyed'). In contrast to this social construct, these rappers advocate for their black roots as an intrinsic and basic feature of their identity ('They label us as "Coloureds", but I know I'm a black man; Don't dare call me Coloured when I'm African you see').

On the semantic field of resilience

To complete our study and provide an overall frame for the analysis of our corpus, we attempt to explore the range and frequency of terminology lexically or semantically related to the notion of *resilience*. In doing so, our results underlined the emergence of two broad categories, namely *oppression* and *resurgence*, out of the 247 resilience-related identified terms (containing lemmas). This shows the amplitude of the notion of *resilience* and it suggests that this is not a minor topic in their narrative. In other words, on the basis of large amount of resilience-related words in this corpus and the analysis provided earlier, this exploratory approach reveals resilience as a notable topic in the lyrical content of these two rap crews.

More specifically, a closer look of the use and distribution of these terms reveals that there is a higher frequency and wider spectrum of terms connected with *struggle* (e.g. 'race, dead, history, crime, past') than resurgence (e.g. 'freedom, change, peace, hero').

Discussion

The present corpus approach to the study of central aspects of resilience through the most prominent conscious rappers that emerged in the '80s in South Africa has provided us with illuminating results. The linguistic construction of two antagonistic groups through the use of personal pronouns (e.g. *I/we* vs. *they*) together with the explicit use of ethnic labels (black vs. white), amongst other terms (see Table 2 to Table 5), appears to be central in building the notion of resilience. In addition, the establishment of these two parallel dichotomies contributed to effectively explain central aspects of the notion of resilience in the South African context. This enabled the affirmation of positive characteristics associated with the black group and the condemnation of the complex situation of this community at multiple social levels. In doing this, the presence of the white group in the corpus and the description of its detrimental effects over the first community appear to be central in understanding the notion of resilience (see Table 4 and Table 5; Figure 1 and Figure 2). For instance, whiteness is very often associated with power and authority (e.g. 'White man have powah. Black haffi' suffer'; see Table 4 for additional examples) whilst blackness often implies a social cost (e.g. 'Never ever sound like your own race to the white face'; see Table 5 for more instances). In this regard, it is important to emphasise that these conscious rappers dedicate a significant portion of their narrative production to describe several (often multilayered) challenges that contribute to perpetuate their conditions under an oppressive atmosphere. These range from education at schools, the use of media, institutional violence, amongst others. Relevant in this context, part of the underlying message of these rappers appears to be in line with Steve Biko's concept of *Black Consciousness* in that their testimonies give contextual clarity to the notion of police and politicians obtaining white privilege and power (e.g. 'Politician endorses, they've become causeless'), thus acting as agents of oppression from within the native oppressed communities (see Biko 2004).

Delving deeper into our results, the analysis of the most frequent word (*I*), and to a lesser extent *we*, also revealed that these rappers devote a significant number of language resources to underline the notion of *belonging* and to generate a reflection on the nature and causes of their *struggle*. In other words, as community leaders, they make an effort to unpack the causes of their struggle and validate their communal attempts, hopes and even rights for transforming their reality. To illustrate this, the examples in Table 2 as well as some instances in Table 5 underlined the positive social and identity association of being black. Affirming their black roots (e.g. 'We choose to learn of our Black ancestry') emerges as an effective alternative in order to deny and defy the

impositions of the white group (e.g. 'And how much longer must I suffer for the White man's sin?') and enable their own resurgence (e.g. 'I've grown up searching for heroes in my community'). Similarly, another important finding in our analysis has to do with an additional struggle strictly related to the notion of being *coloured*. In our corpus, rappers attack the use of this ethnic label imposed by the apartheid regime by underlining its artificiality and its dividing nature, therefore highlighting the relevant social cost that this label represents for them (e.g. 'they label us coloureds; Our blackness was destroyed'). What is interesting from a linguistic viewpoint is that, despite their rejection of the label *coloured* (e.g. 'Don't dare call me Coloured when I'm African you see'), the use of Kaaps shows that these rappers are aligning their identities with members of the coloured communities as well. Thus, although English is the main channel to communicate across all racial groups and the term *African* acts a hypernym that accommodates all identities, it is our intention to monitor the use of this variety and labels in the '90s and '00s as the sociopolitical situation has also evolved overtime.

An additional resource in strengthening their strategy of constructing an overall antagonism between these two groups is the effective use of the pronoun *you* to address both in-group and out-group *members* in a more direct way. Unlike with other personal pronouns in this corpus, direct references to the two target groups by means of the second personal pronoun *you* (and *your*) allow both highlighting aspects of *belonging* and *struggle* associated with the black group (in-group: e.g. 'You're gonna fall victim to the payback. You better stay Black') and negative traits intrinsically connected to the white group (out-group: 'You taught us murder you taught us greed') with more dynamism. In line with the other personal pronouns, however, the use of *you* also contributes to effectively underline key aspects around the notion of resilience by speaking directly to the addressees and letting the listeners identify social causes and consequences more clearly.

Taking in consideration these results, we can affirm that resilience and other social aspects intrinsically connected to this notion represent notable issues that are both reflected and addressed by prominent rappers of this genre in the '80s. If we define resilience as the capacity of individuals or communities to withstand or recover from adversity or even to endure by adapting to difficult conditions (ed. Fraile-Marcos 2019), this corpus detects a primary focus on the struggle of a main target group (black) because of the existence of an oppressive *other*, that is, the white group. In such a context, a secondary focus on the affirmation of their roots and identity has been identified as a possible or the only way for recovery or resurgence. This finding becomes even clearer in the study of the semantic field of resilience where lexical units related to the *resurgence* of this group are less common. As stated previously, there is a much higher frequency and

wider spectrum of terms connected with the notion of *struggle* (e.g. 'race, dead, history, crime, past') than resurgence (e.g. 'freedom, change, peace, hero'). As a potential explanation for these results, one might argue that the '80s conscious rappers' background and direct knowledge or experience of the wrongs of the apartheid era are still driving forces of their understanding of the South African social situation from their specific context and perspective.

Conclusion

The in-depth study of the narrative oral production of prominent conscious rappers that emerged in the '80s in South Africa, namely *POC* and *BN*, highlighted the topicality of resilience in their lyrics. Departing from a strictly delimited corpus, the analysis with *AntConc* revealed that these rappers seek to explain the sociopolitical struggle of the black group amongst members of this community and wider audience whilst strengthening their sense of belonging to this group. In doing so, the corpus also showed a parallel emergence of an oppressive *other*, the white group, whose detrimental effects over the black group play a central role in the emergence of their resilience. Besides the effective use of personal pronouns, ethnic labels and other contextual-loaded terms devoted to fulfil this aim, our analysis also shows that, whilst the affirmation of their black identity acts as a potential effective way of underpinning their resurgence, a higher number of linguistic resources have been dedicated to the notion of struggle or oppression. In this regard, further research with conscious South African rappers from subsequent decades should explore the evolution of the references to the coloured community as the social spectrum for this ethnic group in post-apartheid South Africa has been often complicated (Adhikari 2005b). In addition, extending the corpus so as to include post-'80s rappers will allow us to study if more contemporary economic and political institutions, as part of the process of the democratic consolidation, have given way to a post-resilient society or to subaltern resilience related to new but also long-standing conditions of precarity (Bracke 2016). Finally, further research using critical discourse analysis (CDA) amongst other discourse-based strategies could pave the way for entry into more qualitative investigations.

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