

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Music multilingualism and hip hop consumption among youths in Nigeria

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Through the use of qualitative and quantitative methods which included In-depth Interview (34IDI), focus group discussions (4FGD), content analysis (of extracts from the songs of three award winning hip hop artists in Nigeria) and a 300 sample survey; the study examined the structure of multilingualism in the Nigerian hip hop as a catalyst for: the increasing consumption of the music among youths, the changing youth normative values and social relations and group bonding among youths within multicultural society of Nigeria.

**Key words:** Nigeria, multilingualism, hip hop, normative values, cultural consumption.

## INTRODUCTION

The popularity of multilingual hip hop, the contemporary form of the Nigerian Hip Hop, is not in doubt among the Nigerian youths. The Nigerian music industry records tens of billions of naira in music CDs, VCDs sales and concerts ticket sales every year; thanks to the increasing consumption of „hip hop music genre among the Nigerian youths“. The music, in fact is fast becoming a major income earner not only for the direct actors (artists, promoters, marketers, etc) within the industry, but also for the government in terms of taxation. The seeming high consumption of the music, as argued by Adeyemi (2009) caused the electronic media in the country to give space and time to air more of the multilingual hip hop than its international counterpart. Writers such as Bennett (1999) and Mitchell (1996) quite rightly are of the opinion that hip-hop can no longer be simply viewed as an expression of African-American culture. This is because the genre has enjoyed more global popularity and patronage that transcend the acceptance of most other music genres. Having extended beyond its historical roots, in the Bronx,

hip hop has largely become a transnational cultural product that exhibits the globalization tendencies of the (post) industrial society. Studies that focus on hip hop in different societies have established the importance of the genre in creating an avenue through which youths form and express their identity as well as construct meaning and adjust to or contest with the social realities in their environment (Baker and Cohen, 2008; Sarkar et al., 2005; Bennett, 1999). Sarkar et al. (2005) argued that the undertone of rebellion and resistance that characterizes much rap music and hip hop culture makes the music attractive to young people across cultures. Similarly, Bennett (1999) discussed how immigrant youths in Frankfurt, Germany have been able to rework hip hop to act as a mode of expression on issues relating to racism and the problem of national identity. Several other studies have delved into how hip hop music is not only localized and employed as a means of expression, but also appropriated for economic purposes and self empowerment (Baker et al., 2009; Bennett, 1999) as a result of the “closure of traditional employment pathways” (Baker et al., 2009: 152). However, within the global consumption of the music, there are noticeable differences (in forms and not in styles) of hip hop to the

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extent of fusion of local contents with the globalised elements of the music.

In the case of Nigerian hip hop, the music appears to involve innovative dimensions that give it a strong competitive edge over the wholly foreign popular music. One such innovation in the process of localization is what this study has called music multilingualism<sup>1</sup>. This is a creative appropriation of the multiple languages in existence in Nigerian society to create a hybridized musical form using multilingualism. Though, it is only recently that scholars began to take a keen interest in examining the issues that surround and involve the phenomenon of hip hop and multilingualism, music multilingualism has been part of Nigerian popular music since the 1970s. In western literature, the study of multilingualism in hip hop has come under different banners and titles such as „performing glocal identities: code switching in African songs produced in Perth, Australia“ (Zagoria, 2009); „multilingual code switching in Montreal hip hop“ (Sarkar et al., 2005); „language mixing in rai music“ (Bentahila and Davies, 2002) and „language choice in hip hop in Tanzania and Malawi“ (Fenn and Perullo, 2000) to mention just a few. In Nigeria, scholars have only recently started engaging in the various dimensions of the phenomenon. Common in the works of the authors mentioned earlier is a study of mixed language codes in the lyrics of hip hop music. The examinations of this phenomenon in hip hop by these scholars have yielded some astonishing results which have contributed immensely to our knowledge-particularly in the area of the structure and composition of the multilingualism used in the performance of hip hop music across the globe. However, the extent to which multilingualism has impacted the consumption of the music and the social relations it has engendered among the youths is a fundamental area that has not received much attention in the extant literature. Yet in a country like Nigeria, the portrait of the music is such that it is fast becoming the single most important subject in the lives of the youths after football.

The seeming attachment of Nigerian youths to

<sup>1</sup> For this study, Music multilingualism means the new form of popular music developed within the Nigerian socio-cultural setting which combine in its lyrical texts multiple words of different languages. Such words combinations will of course involve „code switching and random language mixing“ (Okolo, 2002) of lexical items in the composition and performance of such music. It is the alternation of words of different language origins in a musical situation. Nevertheless, there is no condition for the longevity of the words combined or the style of combination of the words. For example, „ni gbawo ni o fe ki a“ (Yoruba) introduce (SE) e si (Yoruba) wetin dey go on for area (PE). The previous sentence simply means: when would you be ready to be introduced to the intricacies of the area. Apparently, there are more Yoruba words in the previous sentence than any of the other two languages (Standard English and Pidgin English). However, if used in musical situation, this sentence will not be a better music multilingualism than if it was composed as: when will you be ready for me to (SE) „ja e si“ (Yoruba) how ditin dey go for area (PE). What is important in music multilingualism is the combinations and not the number of lexical items of the different languages.

multilingual hip hop, indeed, has far-reaching implications for the changing character of the youths“ normative values as well as the continuing consumption of the music. Therefore, a study that focuses on these issues is not only timely but essentially needed to expand the frontier of knowledge in this area.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted various methods to collect the data needed for the research. The methods included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observations and a 300 informant sample survey. The main targets of the research were youths, particularly youths who are fans of the Nigerian multilingual music. Thus, the interviews were conducted among clubbers in three nightclubs in the city of Ibadan, Nigeria. The collection of the data in nightclubs afforded the authors the opportunity to observe the fans of the music in action and study the social interactions among the clubbers as some of the multilingual hip hop was played by the DJs. Thus, some social behaviours of dancers/clubbers to the music were observed. Apart from this, the Participant Observations affirmed the choices of the artists/songs selected for this study as the selected songs were played constantly. This gives credence to the popularity and the currency of the artists both within the music industry and among the audiences. The survey was mainly designed to supplement the data gathered on how the multilingual hip hop impacts normative values among youths. However, the questionnaires were administered to and filled by all categories of people (young, old, female, male, regardless of their preference for the music) in the city of Ibadan.

## DATA PRESENTATION

### The multilingual structure of the award winning hip hop music in Nigeria

One major assumption on which this whole study is built is that the wide acceptability of Nigerian Hip Hop music is (partly) based on the artists“ incorporation of local popular languages in the composition and performance of the music. This assumption is based on the fact that many of the award winning singles and albums of the contemporary hip hop artists exhibit mixtures of different languages including the standard English (SE), pidgin English (PE), Yoruba, Igbo and other local dialects. What the inclusion of the various languages shows is that it allows an artist to engage in social dialogue with his audience; conveying his inner thought and philosophy, in such a way that is easy to understand and acknowledged by the fans. This is exemplified in the song Tongolo<sup>2</sup> by Daniel Oyebanji (aka D“banj) in 2005. In this song, D“banji codes-switched from PE to SE:

As i dey waka up the road (As i walked up the road),  
I see one baby, I nail her no be small (I saw one lady, I

<sup>2</sup> In the social context of Nigeria, market men and women, are perceived as illiterates, poor and as people generally with low social status.

liked her a lot),  
 I yannam the truth, i yannam the fact and i yannam no be small (I told her the truth, i told her the fact and I told her everything),  
 She no wan gree my own o (She declined my entreaties),  
 Until i yannam the koko (Until i told her the real thing).

Apparently, conveying this message in SE may distort some of the rhythms and free flow styling which afforded the song its aesthetic and commercial success. Thus, the mix of PE, SE and Yoruba languages seems to have liberated the musician from the challenges and struggling of lack of free flow which may result from the use of only SE to communicate his message. Since musical text must flow freely from the thought of the composer, Dbanj's choice of music multilingualism appears to be with the intention to connect aesthetically in a simple way that ensures a wider audiences and commercial success.

Listen, listen  
 Mo wa talented (i am talented)  
 Yes mo wa gifted (yes i am gifted)  
 Seri kini mi o magbe e lifted (my thing will lift you)  
 Seri hips e ma fi"le shifted (your hips will be left shifted)  
 Igo oju e ma fi"le tinted (you spectacle will be left tinted)  
 Boyfriend e gon o wa evicted (even your boyfriend is evicted)  
 O mope Dbanj is addicted (do you not know that D"banj is addicted)  
 Te ba sope no maa wa persistent (if you said no i will be persistent)  
 Mo ni iyawo nle do not get it twisted (i am married so do not get it twisted)

The simplicity of the rap notwithstanding the switching to SE at the end of each line serves to: one, attract the interest of those who may not understand Yoruba language (that dominate the rap) and two, exhibit the type of rhymes pattern that characterize American rap style. Another award winning Nigerian hip hop song titled „my wedding day“ by Abolore Akande (aka 9ice) in 2008 also exhibits music multilingualism in its lyrical texts. It is noteworthy to state here, that a unique feature of 9ice is his creative usage of the Yoruba adages and poetic thoughts in the compositions and performance of hip hop. This differentiates him not only in style but also aesthetically. While many other multilingual artists in the industry let PE dominate their songs, for 9ice, Yoruba language is the main language in his hip hop, while he mixes it with PE and SE. Wedding day, the second track on the artist's multiple award winning album, is archetypal of 9ice's hip hop. Using switching between four languages (Hausa, Yoruba, PE and SE), 9ice projects the message of love in this song:

On our wedding day,

Maa gbe"su lena, maa tun fonaroka (i will prepare a large feast),  
 Gbogbo awon its still dey le (all the single girls lurking around),  
 This time around,  
 Omo sai gobe (ladies bye bye), Sweet girl,  
 Na you a go marry (it is you i will marry),  
 Aya wa ni nobi story (it is not a tell tale she is our wife),  
 Iyawo wa nii (she is our bride).

Many of the lexical features in this song are largely incomprehensible to non Yoruba speakers. However, the artist from time to time switches to SE to draw-in the audiences that may have been excluded by the profuse use of the Yoruba language. The song in any case is a very popular song among the youths in Nigeria particularly among the girls irrespective of ethnicity. The message of the music is a message of affection, marriage and declaration of love. Here, one finds 9ice reverting back into the Yoruba culture for inspiration. For example, the lyrical text „aya wa nii“ (Yoruba) „no be“ (PE) story (SE) „iyawo wa nii“ (Yoruba) (it is no telltale she is our wife) can be contrasted with „aya mi ni“ (she is my wife). Marriage is a union that goes beyond the principal actors (bride and bridegroom) in Yoruba culture, as it is in many other Nigerian cultures. Marriage still takes place between two extended families despite modernization.

Thus, if the artist had used the latter version he would have conveyed the value of nuclear family to his audiences. But, he chose to use the former, perhaps, not to disengage with the philosophy of marriage (of the people whose language he has adopted mainly for his music) from the language itself.

Finally, „do me“, the leading track in Games Over by Peter and Paul Okoye (Psquare) in 2008 has won the duo several awards in Nigeria and Africa. The song is dominated mainly by PE and SE, though there are bits of Yoruba here and there in the entire song. The extract from the chorus is as follows:

“If you do me, I do you, man no go vex  
 Step on the dance floor man no go vex  
 Touch me, I touch you, man no go vex  
 You say, I say, man no go vex,  
 Step on the dance floor, man no go vex  
 So won't you give it to me, i will give it to you  
 So make you give it to me some more, some more E get  
 as e dey do me”

As with the other terms used by various other multilingual hip hop artists, it may be a bit difficult to say with a degree of absoluteness what exactly the Psquare mean by „do me i do you“. But, taking together with other words (touch me, i touch you; make u give it to me some more) it becomes easy to infer what message the duo

was communicating to their fans. Though amenable to different interpretations, the lyrics connote codes for sex roles and actions. The words illustrate subtle bedroom language which typify flirtatious or sexual innuendoes. What is important to us here is that the structure of the lyrics showcases the admixture of PE and SE.

### **Music multilingualism and hip hop consumption**

Hip hop has the potential to attract into its fold diverse youths of different races, classes, ethnics, beliefs (Price, 2007; Bennett, 1999). This much is true in Nigeria as the music appears to have totally encapsulated the entire life of average urban (Omojola, 2006) and increasingly rural youths across the country. The inclusion of music multilingualism in the performance of hip hop appears to have provided the youths much needed impetus to embrace a „made in Nigeria product“. So central is the phenomenon to the increasing acceptance of the Nigerian hip hop that even the unlettered and some adults, are not left out in the frenzy created by the music. In the words of an interviewee: “The hip hop music that is composed with multiple languages has given the music industry a growth. Since the time we started having musicians that sign multilingual music we can see that the music industry has grown bigger. People are buying more music CDs compared to when we have our old musicians who sang with one language. Now we have people that sing with different languages; Pidgin, Yoruba, English, and that really motivate the young people...to listen to hip hop music. Sincerely, if you sing a song that is just with one language, I tell you, you may not sell very well. And if you look really well you will see that we now buy more of our music than we buy the foreign music because the way they sing it, it is mixed. Even when they (the musicians) rap, they rap with different languages. But for the earlier pop music and foreign hip hop, it is English and English alone (Male, 2010)”.

Another equates the impact to a kind of musical revolution: “The multilingualism used by the Nigerian artists has revolutionized the hip hop industry, in Nigeria. The languages used today by the (Nigerian) musicians is a major tool in the music which has been able to bring about a lot of inclusions of our own culture and people, in order to increase the market and in order to allow our people to embrace the music better. So we realized that the inclusion of Yoruba language, Ibo language, Hausa language, with English and especially Pidgin English... have been able to expand the market structure and the level of hip hop growth in Nigeria (Male, 2010)”. In the words of a Female clubber: “The hip hop now make use of different languages that are present in Nigeria and even the universal language of the literate and illiterate that is Pidgin English. So, that captures the interest of the people because there is no way you would not find your

way into it. If you are not the type that understands Yoruba you will, find Hausa there, and if you cannot understand Hausa you will find Ibo there. And if you do not fit into any of these then you will fit into the general language of the people which is the Pidgin English. That is why you see that even market women; bus conductors can sing the hip hop songs today because they can flow along with it and understand the languages (Female, 2010). Yet a discussant said: “Multilingualism in the Nigerian music is like the in thing now in the country. Everybody is listening to it. Even our daddies and mummies really dance to the tune of the music. So...the music is now popular and embraced by not only the youths in the country, but also by our parents. Even the market men and women are now dancing to it (Female, 2010)”.

The previous remarks underscore the extent to which multilingual hip hop has affected the consumption of Nigerian hip hop music. The data suggest that, hitherto, hip hop was mainly performed using English, making it a bit difficult for those who are not fluent in the language to enjoy the music, and therefore excluded from its consumption. Pop music, as hip hop was then generally called in the country, was seen as a „class“ music which was enjoyed by the educated in society. Though the music then was still of the youths it was for a certain class of youths – university and college students, graduates and young professionals, etc. Thus, the fan base of the music was restricted and its consumption and influence on the general lifestyle of the people were limited. Accordingly, the market for and the industry of the music in the country was stunted without much development in terms of fan base, industry structure and the economic fortunes of the artists. However, the perspective of the aforementioned data indicates that the Nigerian hip hop has moved beyond the categorization of music of „the educated“ or even of the youths. The music is popular among every class and it is enjoyed by every category of people in the society. The „tide“ of music multilingualism, the major mover of the „hip hop“ music, allows the music to penetrate deep into the music culture of the Nigerian people such that even market men and women<sup>2</sup> today consume it.

As a consequence of the enlarged numbers of consumers of the music, the music industry has experienced unprecedented growth and expansion of market since the introduction of music multilingualism in the musical landscape of the country. More people now buy the CDs of the local music artists than before. Artists are therefore, recording tens of millions of album sales, translating into multimillion naira both in record deals and advertorial sponsorships. As this happens, there is a gradual construction and reconstruction of the meanings attached to the profession of music. Hip hop musicians are now popular, rich, celebrated and better known within and outside Nigeria.

### Multilingual hip hop and youth normative values

Multilingual hip hop serves as an outlet for Nigerian youths to socially create and recreate themselves to suit their desired identity. Some of the symbolic elements of the music, as typified by such material items as: bling-bling, dress codes, Hennessey (hard liquor), etc, constitute elements of social identity that have important implications for youths' normative values as well as for the wider societal values. To a large extent, contemporary multilingual hip hop is a product oriented towards postmodernity where everything seem ephemeral (Ritzer, 2008). In the context of Nigerian multilingual hip hop there appears to be no depth (Abati, 2009) but superficiality that is enhanced by twenty-first century technology. There appear to be a recreation/remodification of certain values among youths as a result of the consumption of the music. These supposedly renewed values are designated tendencies of youths in contemporary Nigerian society. And these tendencies are located within the framework of what the youths now love to be identified with or without recourse to the mainstream roles and values expected of them. In any case, there appears to be uniform responses from empirical data as regards the specifics of the values emerging from the consumption of multilingual hip hop. These includes emerging form of dress codes (fashion), liberal sexual orientations, rascality and changing relations with elders through the adoptions and uses of street codes in communications. These are further explained shortly. To examine the possible changing youth normative values as a result of the consumption of multilingual hip hop, respondents were first asked to state in general terms the directions of the impact of the music on youth behavior.

Out of the 300 persons involved in the survey, 74.7% of them believed the music has impacted youth normative values negatively while 25.3% believed otherwise. This result suggests that the informants believed the music has impacted the youth normative values in the negative direction. In giving their opinion, it appears that the respondents juxtaposed the emerging youth values with the dominant normative values in the Nigerian society. In terms of fashion, the seeming deviations pervading the current dress sense/codes of the youths in the name of trendy fashion are as a result of imitation of the hip hop artists and their stage dancers. Nigerian hip hop, following its counterpart in the United States is fast becoming music that showcases the modern fashion trends to its numerous fans: "You know these musicians are somehow the ones that publicize some things or issues in the society. Before you get to know any latest thing in town such as the kind of shirt or wears that is reigning you get to know from the hip hop artists. Do not forget that the Nigerian hip hop themselves wears what their counterparts in America, in London wear. They are

the ones that bring the latest fashions to us and we learn from them...". The suggestion here is that the artists are models if not local heroes to many of their fans. It is no strange sight today, to see boys wearing earrings or low-slung trousers as many hip hop artists do. Nigerian Youths emulate every fashion choice of the multilingual hip hop artists and long to be like them in every ramification, including in what the artists wear or do as fashion. The projection of new fashion values can be observed in every video clip of multilingual hip hop. Indeed, part of our observations from watching the music videos of the selected music is that the artists exhibit new sense of dresses that may not be totally accepted by the dominant dress values in the Nigerian society.

In the music videos of Dbanj (tongolo), Psquare (do me), 9ice (my wedding day) dresses such as skimpy skirts, low-cut tops, tight jeans etc were worn by the participants in the videos. Although some of the just mentioned dress styles have been around for a while, the constant adoption of such dress sense for the music videos suggest that the music and its artists project to its listeners that these are the dress codes for the „happening“ guys and girls. They are the dress values for the moment or modern times. Yet some of the respondents expressed reservations about the kind of fashion trend been set by the artists and their dancers. The general conclusion is that the mode of dressing imitated from the artists through the multilingual music videos is contrary to the normative values of the society. To be sure, the survey result shows an overwhelming majority (95.3%) of respondents stating that the multilingual hip hop has affected the "fashion" sense of youth negatively, while only 4.7% believed otherwise. The specifics of the fashion trend are highlighted in the words of an interviewee: "You would see some ladies dressing with some of their breast widely opened. You see some in trouser jeans that do not cover all their buttocks, showing the colour of their underwear. You'd see some men in plated/weaved hairdo. These are some of the things presented in the music videos of artists today. This is not supposed to be so; men do not plate hair in this part of the world (Male, 2010)". An FGD discussant says: "Looking at the code of dressing today by the hip hop artists and their dancers, many of the youths tend to imitate their dress codes not minding the consequence. The entertainers wear it for a specific purpose but those imitating them are not wearing for the same purpose as the artists. And some of these codes of dressings are not permissive in our society. So these are some of the drastic negative effect of the hip hop music today (Opinion Leader, 2010)".

What is seen as negative here is the perceived non-conformity of the youth fashion sense with the dominant dress codes in Nigeria. This may not be surprising owing to the fact that dress is a material possession which may serve as item of symbolic identification

(Sudreth, 2009). Having identified with hip hop and its sensibilities, the youths are bound to adopt some of the symbolic tendencies that could identify them easily as hip hoppers. Consequently, sagging pants, braided hair, low-cut tops etc, are all hip hop dress values in Nigeria. While these may be strange values when located within larger fashion values, it will be well okay to remember that part of the features of hip hop is rebellion and expressiveness (Bennett, 1999). Thus, within the subculture of multilingual music listener, „dressing“ goes beyond mere wearing of clothes, there are meanings attached to the kind of attire worn and even the way it is worn. In some cases, it is a form of expression while in most part it is an identity projection. In fact, these seemingly „deviating“ dress codes are used to construct and project hip hop identity which, to a large extent, becomes an existential phenomenon among Nigerian youths. Another noticeably changing normative value among the Nigerian youths concerns the emerging youth relations with the elders as a consequence of the projected values of multilingual hip hop. Many of the informants believe that the youth's attitudes/relations with the senior citizens are impolite as a result of the orientations derived from the music. For example, an interviewee says that: “Basically the Nigerian hip hop music has impacted on the youths” values. I believe the music makes most of the youths today to behave badly, to be rude, and to talk anyhow to themselves. It brings some derogatory words out of individuals that makes us behave rudely even to our parents and which is not supposed to be”.

Another said: “The music has really impacted on youth negatively to the extent that many of them will not take you serious while talking to them on a very serious issue. Sometimes they may just respond to your questions by saying „mummy o ti yapa jo“ (mummy it is plenty). They tend not to take the elderly ones very seriously any more, they just waive things off like that, „nkan to nlo ni siyin ni yen jare“ (that is what is going on now) as if they are trying to orient you into their world. So, the way they talk to us adult using those codes is annoying. But i do not think that they know, but even if they know, i do not think they care (Opinion Leader, 2010)”. Complementarily, the responses elicited from the question on the impact of multilingual hip hop on youths “relations with elders” shows that while only 2% of all respondents believed the impact of multilingual hip hop on youth relations with the elders is positive, an overwhelming majority (98%) seems to disagree. Further, 83% of respondents are of the opinion that the Nigerian youth are oriented more towards behaviours that can be considered as “rascally” as a result of consumption of the music, with 16.3% disagreeing. The data seems to show that multilingual hip hop audiences may have been exposed to some values which project some of their actions/behaviours as rude/unmannered. The expressiveness which hip hop engenders appears to encourage the use of slang

derived from multilingual hip hop in real life conversations. Indeed, adoption of some the codes in multilingual hip hop in conversation with an elderly person (within the context of dominant values) could be viewed as highly disrespectful. However, because the older generations do not belong to the subculture within which the youth who use these codes operates, the two groups may hold different views of the codes and intended meanings.

True, communications through the use of certain language(s) within a social circle requires mutual intelligibility of meanings for appropriate understanding to avoid the problems of (mis)interpretations. Nevertheless, there is the need to realize that youth and the members of the older generations, in any society are always worlds apart. The latter operates with contemporaneous values while the former is entrenched in and absorbed with nostalgic feelings of how things used to be. Therefore, it may be that the youths who adopt multilingual slangs for everyday communication have no rude intention. The problem is with lack of shared meaning and interpretation of essence of the codes. Finally, multilingual hip hop is believed to make the Nigerian youths liberal about sex. Sex traditionally, is neither discussed in the open nor is the actual act performed for public consumption. Any mention of the word is always in a hushed voice especially if or when there are children around. Therefore, few people will expect an explicit mention sex in the theme of a piece of music. For the earlier musicians, terms that illustrate sex and sexual act abound in their music but this is always coded in such a way that it will take an extra-intelligent child to decipher the meanings. However, for the contemporary multilingual hip hop, sex, in fact is one fundamental theme of the music. According to an interviewee: “Premarital sex is not something that is so common in our culture down here. For you to now see your people singing about it and actually trying to paint a positive image about it li think it is very wrong and these are the negative values that youths now do as a result of the hip hop music. So in terms of sex, hip hop music has made youths to be more liberal (Male, 2010). A FGD discussant said: “In music of yesteryears, you will never see video clips that are as raw as what we have now. Musicians like Sunny Ade and the likes sing about sex in a sensible way. But, these days Dbanj and other Hip hop artists talk about sex anyhow. You hardly have any music produce in Nigerian today without one thing or the other about sex (Male, 2010)”. Another one says: “Most times you will find girls in Dbanj's video almost naked. Some dance in such a suggestive ways that makes men think about sex... This really reduces the value that guys placed on girls nowadays...and this is translating into every day thing. It has really exposed everyone to immorality”. They even dance in the video as if they are having sex...these things never happened before. To tell you the truth, some

of these things that we see from the music videos have gone a long way to affect our attitude about sex”.

This data shows that the contemporary Nigerian music is music of sexual orientation. This is why it may not be strange to find that music produced in Nigeria today must say one thing or the other about sex. The production of the music is couched in capitalistic tendencies with the producers having a substantial influence on the theme. S/he (the producer) is wont to offer what will sell to the market and since sexual fantasies align with youths’ orientations, it is only logical to offer what will sell. However, the study shows that the consumption of the music impacts the traditions and customs of sexual relations among youths. In fact the quantitative data shows that 95.3% of respondents believed the Nigerian hip hop has impacted sexual relations among youths „negatively” with just 4.7% indicating otherwise. Having been exposed to sexually suggestive contents through the music, the respondents feel that thinking “about sex” is translating to everyday action. From the lyrics to the visual representations of the music portray little other than sex nuances. Watching most multilingual hip hop music video may be close to watching pornographic movies. Nevertheless, the data says that this liberal sexual orientation derived from watching half nude ladies dancing with the opposite sex in a suggestive manner has also impacted the traditional value of sex, as youths are now involved in the conduct of sexual acts because of their exposure to the contents of Nigerian hip hop.

### **Multilingual hip hop and social bonding among youth**

Culture, in sociology, is the total way of life of a group of people which involves the material and non-material items on which their existence depends. Within cultures are values that “members of a given group hold” (Giddens, 1990: 31) as sacrosanct. Such shared values have the capacity to function at in two dimensions. Firstly, shared values work as social bonds on which the existence of a group is held together (Scheff, 1990). Secondly, and to a large extent, it works as a force through which a group’s social realities are constructed and reconstructed. In both ways, culturally bound values inform modes of social relations among members of a group. Within this framework, the observation of this study is that multilingual hip hop throws up certain sub-cultural tendencies which are essentially group binders. The study found that the Nigerian multilingual hip hop is listened to and enjoyed not only when listeners are alone, but also when they are in groups. An interviewee said: “...I am a nigger and I am a party rider person, a party freak. I listen to the worldly hip hop musicians, like all these Dbanj, 2face and some others as well. I have Nigger friends and mostly we all listen to hip hop music.

Hip hop is a group thing you can enjoy it alone but, it is

always good to listen to it when you are together with some of your friends. So generally with my friends I listen to all these hip hop music, if these are what you called music multilingualism then yes that is what we listen to (Male, 2010)”. A discussant in a FGD session says: “I enjoy it more when with friends because it is loud, it is a loud music it is not slow it is not soul music. It is the Nigerian hip hop, it is saucy, you will always have something you want to be able to say to somebody and possibly make facial expressions and stuff like that when you are listening to it. So, I enjoy it very much with friends (Female, 2010)”.

Another discussant in an FGD session says: “Yes the music indeed serves as social bond to me and my friends. Sometimes we gather in relaxation centers beyond this place to enjoy a plate of pepper soup and listen to a good music. Sometimes I am the first one to be here and through the help of phones I make calls to them and they will arrive and we will enjoy together. You know this music is like a kind of spirit once you and your clique are into it you may be lost in (Male, 2010)”. Yet another respondent says: “The music of 2face, Dbanji, the entire Nigerian hip hop you cannot really enjoy them alone. You’d need some people to dance around with you. So, I am always making sure that am with „awon temi” (my friends) when i listen to them. The previous responses reveal that although one can listen to and enjoy the music alone; multilingual hip hop is actually a group thing which is better enjoyed when with friends. Respondents say the music is “loud” and “saucy” in apparent reference to the vulgarized multilingual lyrics of the music. The sauciness and the rhythms means the music is different from “slow” or “soul” music which is less “loud” and can be enjoyed in solitude. Consequently, the group thing in the music is not as a result of the unlikelihood of enjoying the music alone, but it is because doing such (listening to it alone) is devoid of social relation elements that are imbued in collectivity. Listening to the Nigerian hip hop music with „awon temi” (friends) allows respondents to say some funny things and “make facial expressions” to one another. This shows that the music engenders and cements social relations through the verbal and non-verbal actions such as dancing together and making of faces while listening. Perhaps, these are the key ingredients on which the momentum for the enjoyment in the music is built. Salient therefore is the fact that multilingual hip hop is music of group relations.

Needless to say that groups or friendship may not be formed primarily based on the music, but once formed, and if the members are the party rider type, it appears that (among these respondents) the music helps to connect and bond friends in social situations. As the music connects them and binds them into a socially informed group, a uniquely different sense of identity is developed. Friends start to see themselves as people of like minds (hence, the party riders, niggers, etc) and start

to act or behave in certain ways to conform to the group values. And this must be maintained by ensuring that the kinds of friends that flock around them are also clubbers or party riders or niggers. In this way, multilingual hip hop becomes a medium for group self expression and determinant of group membership. As it appears, the music allows the listeners to make sense of and self-determine who they are, who their friends are (or should be) and what they would like to be known for.

Consequently, the self understandings and interpretations that inform the social meaning which is constructed and expressed through the party rider identity serves as group binder as well as group „separator“. This is because there is apparently the issue of in-group and out-group based on whether one is a “party rider” or not. In view of this, it became necessary to examine how the music is used „for social networking among the youths“. Common in the response of the informants is the idea that the present hip hop music in Nigeria possesses the power of networking. An interviewee „who“ appears to know or have experienced the process of networking through Nigerian hip hop explains the process: “Hip hop music promote social networks through say for example my „maga“ (a victim of internet scam) just sent me money, i will just call a friend and inquire about where it is happening and my friend may say come and meet us at „le ma view“ (one of the nightclubs in Ibadan) or say a social event is going on here in Abuja or something is going on here in Lagos at „eleven forty-five“ (a nightclub in Lagos), and I will like to be there. So it generate social network. Through that you spread your connectivity and by that it will inspire you to be the clubbing type, it promotes your clubbing ability, it gingers you to go to clubbing regularly.

The summary is that it makes people to be social. You come to know different people. Through that you meet different people, and you meet people that you know you can generate the same information you will need to grow in the scamming world. Another one says: “Look, let me tell you the truth, the hip hop music of today has gone beyond that of what it used to be in the past in the country. For example there is this galleria they do in Lagos; this galleria thing is like they bring in artists, different kind of artists. And because i love Dbanj and the kind of people I move with are also down with Dbanj, i give them a call about event that is going to involve Dbanj and also give a call to meet at a joint or spot that connect us musically. By doing this it bring a connection with us and we could always do and talk about different things (Male, 2010). Though, short of explicit details, the data just presented explains how multilingual hip hop connects people of similar musical taste. The essential idea is that the music provides friends the opportunity to link up in places where they can relax and enjoy the music of artists of their choice. The data suggest that once a member of group is in the mood or in the case where his

“maga sent him money” he calls his friends to share some moments together in an atmosphere where they could enjoy a piece of music. This presents the study with a pivotal dimension that needs a little exploration. As much as music is a cultural object, it is also essentially rooted in the social milieu. No social event particularly in relaxation spots such as nightclubs and galleria is complete without musical events. Whether live music or playing of “frozen music” (Omojola, 2006: 196) the totality of a nightclub event revolves around music. Nevertheless, when friends link up to enjoy music, they more often than not engage in extra musical associations. Within the premise of the musical event, extensive social relations take place that may cement existing group relations. Friends get to gist, talk or chat on several issues of importance to them apart from dancing and other merry making that is expected from such scene. Also, at these events, respondents believe one could meet other clubbers of like minds from whom new relationships could develop. This suggests that the social actors within the structure of social relationship come to develop better social connectivity through meeting different people (at social/musical events) as well as maintaining the old relationship. Indeed, sharing the same feelings on this particular cultural item (music) creates a sentimental feeling of shared background among fans.

The feelings that you like what i like provide some imaginary sense of connectivity which may lead to interpretation and reinterpretation of actions among fans. Thus, as hip hop fans construct meanings out of this shared feeling on the multilingual hip hop music (tracks or artists), social relations of various forms are developed. The pre-planned meetings of friends at a social scene through the music or artists they are all “down with” expand the actors social network as they come to meet different (other) people who they could generate the kind of “information they needed to grow” in their businesses. Chanced meetings, such as this and the connection that may develop, though are extra musical, are important to our understanding of the underlying structure of social relations that takes place among fans of the music. Thus, within the social relationship enabled by the music, friends call one another up to meet at a spot to network on business opportunities. Going by this, the networking potential and information sharing opportunity of the music becomes a powerful and veritable source of group relations.

## CONCLUSIONS

Multilingual hip hop music (in Nigeria) is very popular among Nigerian youth. Consequently, it appears that the themes of multilingual hip hop are also becoming the moral compass with which youth interpret their social



environment in the face of increasing moral turpitude within the country. The music and its artists represent for the youth appropriated guiding principal from which/whom they learn to act in everyday life experiences. This shows that the embedded messages in the music have effect on the youth's mental processes of the realities that surround them. In this way, the process of internal value judgment through which the youths construct meanings out of their social environment appeared to be guided by the music. Though, individual listeners may be affected by the music to varied extent, the issue is that once affected, meanings upon meanings can be generated out of the lyrics which may now serve as the compass through which realities are gauged. However, the detachment of the music from the traditions and its encouragement of modern social values mean that the social relations that may evolve and the meanings and identity that are constructed out of it may not be in tandem with that of the dominant values.

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