

## **Acculturation: An Investigation into Afri-Afrikaans or is it Afri-African?**

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### **Abstract**

*Acculturation is taking place in a subtle way in South African schools where the music of the Afrikaans people is taken by Africans and given an African flavour. This phenomenon can be seen in the work of artists like Bongani Nxumalo with his rendition of the Afrikaans song, Loslappie. The counter is also audible where modern Afrikaans music shows influences of African rhythms. This article addresses the issue of how South African teenagers are influenced by teenagers from other cultures in music and song, using a pragmatic paradigm. The researcher argues that acculturation is a spontaneous process where one is not consciously aware of the influences when living in a multi-cultural environment. More dominant cultures will have a more visible effect on minority cultures. In conclusion, this project by closely examining a sample of South African teenagers from different cultures during music-making sheds new light on the way acculturation takes place amongst teenagers in rural South Africa.*

**Keywords:** Acculturation, Afrikaans, Zulu, Music

### **Introduction**

Having worked as an Arts and Culture/Music teacher and subject advisor in different schools with a variety of cultural groups for almost 30 years, the researcher found that subtle cultural influences from other cultures were audible and visible when teenagers were allowed to compose their own songs during creativity sessions in the Arts and Culture class.

The question arose as to whether there is any acculturation taking place between culture groups due to the exposure to other cultures at school. The children that were investigated were in a multicultural school with children from mostly Zulu, English, Afrikaans and German backgrounds. Zulu children in rural Zululand do not have a great amount of exposure to people from other cultures due to living in remote culturally isolated areas. They have a strong music tradition and enthusiastically participate in cultural festivals like the annual Reed Dance that takes place in their region and which is organized by the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini (Tourism KZN, n.d)

Afrikaans teenagers have negated their own musical heritage for many years and showed a preference for European and American pop music. However, they seem to have developed a sense of pride in their own music since the dawn of the "New South Africa" (post-1994 after the first democratic elections). Visser (2007, p. 25) mentions that post-apartheid Afrikaans teenagers have a "fresh outlook" on being Afrikaners and attributes it to the fact that the younger generation are not carrying the burden of older Afrikaner generations who lost their power when the Afrikaans led government was taken over by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994.

When hearing a well-known Afrikaans song being sung by a Zulu artist - Bongani Nxumalo - using typical African rhythms, interest was further sparked to ascertain if

cross-cultural influences are audible and visible when teenagers perform songs from their own and other cultures. Nxumalo, radio announcer and musician grew up in a racially isolated rural community in KwaZulu Natal but now has several Afrikaans musicians as friends (Mahlangu, 2012). He has also performed in the “Raw Rocks” concert with the Afrikaans singer Kurt Darren. Nxumalo said that the moment he heard the song “Loslappie”, he could immediately sense that this song from the Afrikaans culture would fit in perfectly with the Mbaqanqa (mixture of Marabi and Kwela) rhythm. He thus recorded it in this new style and also added line dance movements to the song. Nxumalo’s perception is also that Afrikaans and Zulu music have the same soulful way in which it is sung (B.Nxumalo, pers. comm, 16 April 2013).

To be able to understand the background of the two South African cultures that were investigated, a broad definition of the Zulu and the Afrikaner was needed. The Zulus are part of the Nguni language group. There are more than 45 million South Africans; the Zulu people make up approximately 22.7% of this number (SA history online, 2013). The largest urban concentration of the Zulu people is in the Gauteng Province, and in the corridor of Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The largest rural concentration of Zulu people is in Kwa-Zulu Natal (SA history online, 2013) where this study was conducted.

To define the Afrikaner in the context of this study, I refer to Giliomee (2003, p. xix) who describes the Afrikaner as a white person who spoke Dutch or Afrikaans and was usually referred to as a “burgher” before 1875. Afrikaners descended mainly from Western Europeans who settled at the southern tip of Africa during mid 17th century. Although people of different races today regard themselves as Afrikaners, this study specifically refers to white Afrikaners who make up 39.5% of the total number of 13.5% Afrikaans speaking people in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

The only church in the Cape for more than a century was the Dutch Reformed church which was based on the Calvinist doctrine (Giliomee, 2003, p.5). Due to their mainly Calvinistic upbringing in the past, (white) Afrikaners are known to be more reserved than the African cultures in general when it comes to showing enjoyment – especially through dance and song. Clive (1961, p. 296) reminds us that “contemporary dancing was inextricably connected with drunkenness, gluttony, immodest feasting and loose, depraved living in general” in Calvinist terms and this has certainly had an influence on the traditional Afrikaner who was traditionally brought up in the Calvinist religion.

Not much information is available about the acculturation process when Afrikaans and Zulu music meet, although Kwami (2003) acknowledges acculturation between African and “Coloured” music. “Coloured” denotes a person of mixed racial heritage. Many Coloureds are from the Afrikaans culture and their traditional music can thus be classified as Afrikaans music. However, for this study, Afrikaans music refers to music of the white Afrikaner.

The core research objective was to determine whether dominant cultural groups have more influence than minority groups in the acculturation process in a culturally diverse country. More specifically the study aimed to achieve the following specific research objectives:

1. To analyze methods used in music-making in two diverse cultural groups
2. To describe and compare methods of music-making in these groups.

Two groups of teenage girls were observed and recorded during a music-making session. One group consisted of Zulu girls and the other of mostly Afrikaans girls. These girls were of similar age and background, having been in multi-cultural schools all their lives and having received no formal music training.

The structure of the rest of the article is as follows: First it reviews existing literature relevant to acculturation in the South African context. In a following section the research methodology is presented and data analysis techniques discussed. Hereafter the findings are discussed and conclusions drawn. Lastly, the limitations to this study are discussed and suggestions for further research are made in the conclusion.

### **Reviewing the Literature**

Finding “truth” in the African context is different from elsewhere in the world; it has its own regional knowledge base and ways of knowing. African music is underpinned by African ways of thinking that inform African ways of being and functioning in the world (Primos, 2003, p. 302). Agawu (2003, p. 1) concurs with Primos but in addition alerts us to the fact that African music covers a vast terrain and is influenced by the political and economic control of the continent. It is thus not easy to define the music of a whole continent as just being “African” music. This is also true to a certain degree of Afrikaans music that was formed and shaped on the African continent but from influences of European descendants who came from the Netherlands, France and Germany (Giliomee, 2003, p. 46).

Kaufmann (1972, p. 47) regards all music as acculturative to one degree or another and believes that African music closely resembles the relationships found in the social structures of society. Due to inhabitants of the “new South Africa” - a term that refers to South Africa after the 1994 democratic elections - being more exposed to other cultures and living in closer relationships to other cultures, acculturation may thus occur more regularly and be more noticeable than elsewhere. As mentioned by Joseph and Van Niekerk (2007, p. 488), cultural and musical identities are often intertwined with language, racial and tribal identities. In South Africa, there are 11 official languages (National Language Policy Framework, 2003) which give an indication of how many identities can be found in the South African music landscape. Having such a diverse collection of languages in a country makes acculturation inevitable.

A study could not be found specifically looking at the influence of Zulu (African) music on Afrikaans music and/or the influence of Afrikaans music on Zulu music. Many of the existing studies referring to acculturation concentrate on the creation of respect for other cultures through teaching their music (Joseph & Arber, 2006) and cultural identities through music in South Africa (Joseph & Van Niekerk, 2007). Kaufmann (1972) studied the Shona (African) people and how they view their acculturated music as a process of relationships found in social structures of society. This phenomenon can be seen where Afrikaans and Zulu teenagers are in daily contact in school, sport and cultural settings

and where their unique ways of being are often transferred to the other group in relation to their contact in social structures.

Primos (2003) mentions “[t]hat interface between African, Western, Arabic and Indian traditions, jazz and other popular genres is dynamic and ongoing, producing unique local performances that have enriched both the local and global musical experience.” The white Afrikaans culture which is diverse, with a vast musical heritage that belongs to Africa is usually not mentioned in any such research despite the fact that it also is an influential factor in the music of South Africa. It is presumably grouped under “Western” music and that would take away from its unique character and blend of music styles that was shaped and formed in Africa.

Children who were born after 1994 have had much more direct exposure than previously to other cultures in the school situation due to schools becoming more culturally diverse (Strachan, 2005). In such multi-cultural schools where teenagers are exposed to music of other cultures, there will inevitably be cross-pollination of musical identity during the process of learning about one another’s music.

Fornäs (1995, p. 1) is of the opinion that we do not passively submit to pre-existing frames, rules and codes but reshape and recreate ourselves and each other. Cultures in South Africa are not assimilated by one dominant culture (in this case the African culture) – instead, there is evidence of a reshaping of all the different music styles.

In a multi-cultural society, Dalmonte (2005, p. 101) perceives that ethnic differences and specificities are generally smoothed over by a media-spread common culture despite the fact that there is a culture-specific musical heritage that is prevalent from infancy onwards. Although this may be true in some instances, it is not necessarily true in deeper rural areas where there is still an intense pride in African musical heritage. In just one traditional cultural event, the Zulu Reed Dance Festival, 10 000 Zulu maidens - mostly from rural KZN - participate annually (Tourism KZN, n.d). This is evidence of the strong sense of cultural belonging. High participation levels in inter-school competitions that are organized by the Arts and Culture component of the Department of Basic Education indicate that traditional African music traditions are alive and well in many rural areas.

## **Materials and Methods**

Acculturation amongst Afrikaans and Zulu teenagers in Northern KwaZulu Natal was investigated using a pragmatic paradigm where consequences of actions were studied in a real-world situation using mixed models (MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006). A pluralistic approach (grounded theory), a theory that account for patterns of behaviour and social process, was used to investigate cross-cultural music influences.

Five teenagers from the Zulu culture and five from a largely white Afrikaans culture were invited to participate in the project. Neither group had members with formal music training other than choir singing. Their ages varied from 15 to 18 years. Only four of the invited Zulu teenagers turned up on the day of the recording. One of the girls in the Afrikaans group was from an Afrikaans/English home and another from a German background whilst three girls were from Afrikaans roots. The two groups of teenagers

were invited an hour apart on the same day and were taught the same two songs; one from the Afrikaans culture and one from the Zulu culture. Both songs were taught to them unaccompanied by any instrument. The choice of Afrikaans song was inspired by Bongani and Kurt Darren and the Zulu song - Nginesiponono – was chosen because it was a traditional Zulu song. The girls were not informed about the focus of the study before the session - they were only informed that it was for research purposes. Groups were given the instruction to prepare a performance of the two songs they had been taught; “Loslappie” (Afrikaans song) and “Nginesiponono” (isiZulu song). They could use any instruments in the room (piano, keyboard, guitars, djembe drums, tambourine, mbira, umakhweyana, zulu cocoon ankle rattles - afahlawane, maracas - amaselwa) and could perform in any way that made them feel comfortable. They were given assistance with the words and the tune was repeated until each group could sing the songs given to them. They were then given charts with the lyrics for both songs. The girls were left on their own to prepare. After an hour, preparations had to stop and each group was given the opportunity to perform their two songs whilst being recorded.

To analyse the data, the video recordings were repeatedly viewed and interpreted by the researcher who is from the Afrikaans culture and who has worked amongst Zulu children for almost 20 years. The recordings were viewed and analyzed in respect to the following: instrumentation, movements, singing and rhythm. To ensure a more balanced view, a senior Afrikaans educator with a special interest in Afrikaans culture, Anet Nieuwoudt, was involved to assist with the analysis. Maggie Nkumane from the Zulu culture, a senior educational specialist for Creative Arts/Life Skills, assisted with the analysis of specifically Zulu elements in the performances. Nkumane grew up in a deep rural area in Pongola in an extremely traditional family and was highly knowledgeable about indigenous culture and cultural tourism.

## Findings

This section discusses the findings that were made after scouring the videos for information.

### *Zulu Group: Song 1 – “Loslappie” (Song from Afrikaans Culture)*



Figure 1: The Zulu Group (Photo by Annelie Grobbelaar)

*Instrumentation*

The teenagers in the Zulu group used no instruments for the Afrikaans song.

*Movements*

These teenagers performed the Afrikaans song with typical African movements; the first verse being done with rhythmical non-locomotive movements whilst the second verse was done with traditional synchronized “umBholoho” movements which are usually seen during weddings and where a conductor determines the movements. The final verse of the song was finished off in the same way as the first verse where the locomotive movements stopped and only a little bit of rhythmical body movement could be detected.

*Singing*

The Zulu girls had difficulty remembering the tune of “Loslappie” and eventually asked for a cellphone recording of the tune to assist them. However, when they performed the song it was reasonably well-pitched and although the pronunciation of the words sometimes proved to be a challenge, it was a confident performance. There was good synchronization in the unison singing.

*Rhythm*

A traditional African rhythm was given to the song.

***Zulu Group: Song 2 – “Nginesiponono” (Song from their Own Culture)****Instrumentation*

Each girl chose an instrument; a tambourine, ankle rattles and a single maraca was used.

*Movements*

The movement style was very traditional and synchronized. There was unity in the movements. The first verse was done standing still and moving rhythmically. The next verse was done again with traditional “umBholoho” movements and then doing a rhythmic turning step whilst one hand was held in the air and beating the pulse. The song ended with non-locomotive rhythmical movements like in the first verse. The dance movements in general were very strong, grounded and low, but it was noticeable that the participant on the extreme left was not using her arms as strongly and vigorously as the other participants and was also making “smaller” body movements in her dancing whilst the participant on the extreme right was using very strong traditional arm and body movements.

*Singing*

The song was done in two-part homophonic harmony and reasonably well-pitched. There was good synchronization.

### *Rhythm*

A steady traditional rhythm was kept right throughout the song with the help of the tambourine and maraca.

### *Possible Influences from Afrikaans Culture*

Some of the participants were inhibited in their movements. It was evident that some of the girls were almost imitating Western posture (being more composed) and their movements were not as large and distinct as the movements of older people doing traditional Zulu songs and dances in the community. Despite the fact that there was an array of drums available to them, they chose to use a tambourine, which is a more Western instrument that is frequently used in traditional Afrikaans music.

### *Afrikaans Group: Song 1 – “Loslappie” (Song from their Own Culture)*



Figure 2: The Afrikaans Group (Photo by Annelie Grobbelaar)

### *Instrumentation*

The teenagers in the Afrikaans group used a tambourine, two drums, maracas and ankle rattles. The ankle rattles were used as a percussive introduction to start the song. The one maraca was used to beat a drum whilst the second one was shaken in the conventional manner. The drums were played using only one hand. One participant who was wearing ankle rattles also used body percussion (clicking fingers).

### *Movements*

The drummers did not move any part of their bodies to the beat, except their hand that was beating the drum. The other three were moving rhythmically in totally different ways whilst singing and playing – no synchronization. One participant was only using one foot to keep a beat whilst swinging both forearms in the same direction in time to the music.

*Singing*

The group had difficulty with pitching and started the song on a very low note. It was sung in unison.

*Rhythm*

A fusion between a traditional African and an Afrikaans “Boeremusiek” rhythm was used with the song. “Boeremusiek” is a traditional Afrikaans type of music which is often used for dancing (n+1, 2014).

***Afrikaans Group: Song 2 – Nginesiponono (Song from Zulu Culture)****Instrumentation*

The teenagers in the Afrikaans group used the piano, three drums, maracas and ankle rattles for the second song. The piano was used for a percussive introduction after which a single drum was added followed by the addition of maracas together with ankle rattles. The drum was used in a very unconventional way to form part of the introduction – it was beaten with the side of a fist in a very strong and distinct way. Two drums kept the beat going. The third drum was again used between repetitions and at the end in the same style that it was used in the introduction. This bridge passage seemed disjointed from the actual song and although it was meant to unify the song, it had a jarring effect. The drumming was not synchronized.

*Movements*

Two of the drummers were sitting very still whilst playing a one-handed almost automated rhythm with no rhythm showing in their bodies. The other three participants were doing very light-footed and energetic African-like movements that were quite synchronized. After the first verse, the dancers came to a standstill while one dancer beat a drum to form a bridge passage. The dancing was resumed and ended when the song reached its end.

*Singing*

The song was performed in unison with uncertain pitching. It was also started in a very low key and the participants had difficulty reaching the low notes and staying synchronized.

*Rhythm*

A reasonable rhythm was held throughout the song despite the fact that the drumming was unsteady.

***Possible Influences from isiZulu***

African-like movements were visible in the dancing of three of the participants although it was too light-footed to be described as authentic. These movements were not always



synchronized. The participants used three drums and Zulu ankle rattles which are typically found in traditional Zulu music. Some of the participants danced throughout both songs using hybrid movements from the Zulu tradition.

### *Comparison*

The following table gives a summary of findings regarding the way that Afrikaans and Zulu teenagers make music.

**Table 1**

### *Comparison of Music-Making Styles*

<b>Element</b>	<b>Afrikaans Group</b>	<b>Zulu Group</b>
<b>Instrumentation</b>	Drums	√
	Maracas	√
	Piano	√
	Tambourine	√
	Zulu ankle rattles	√
	Body percussion	√
	Creative use of instruments	√
<b>Movements</b>	Zulu dance movements	√
	Non locomotive rhythmical body movements	-
	Non locomotive rhythmical arm movements	√
	Locomotive movements other than traditional dance	√
	Afrikaans/Western dance movements	√
	Synchronized movements	-
	Harmony	-
<b>Singing</b>	Unison	√
	Good maintenance of pitch	√
<b>Unity</b>	Group identity	√
	Traditional African rhythm	√
<b>Rhythm</b>	Traditional Afrikaans rhythm	√
	Crossover rhythm	√

### **Conclusion**

There is an indication in this study that teenagers are subtly influenced by other cultures in their community and that acculturation is constantly taking place. It was evident that the culture of the more dominant group, the Zulus, has infiltrated the music making of Afrikaans teenagers. It is therefore more a case of Afri-African than it is a case of Afri-Afrikaans since African culture influences are more detectable. The majority of the usually reserved Afrikaans teenagers were inventing dance movements and dancing with both songs. Although some Afrikaans traditional songs are done with specific dance steps in “volkspele” (a traditional Afrikaans dance form where singing takes place whilst

dancing and which was started in 1914 by S.H. Pellissier who based it on Swiss folk dancing), dance steps are not an integral part of traditional Afrikaans singing as found in Zulu music where singing and dancing can hardly be separated.

Although the Afrikaans/Western influence on the Zulu teenagers is more difficult to pinpoint, it can be seen in the more reserved movements of some participants during dancing and the more upright posture used in some Western dances. The Zulu children transferred their typical African singing/dance style to their rendition of the Afrikaans song. The first verse was done whilst standing to wait for everybody to get accustomed to the song and they then started with dance movements in the second verse. The Zulu teenagers refrained from using drums and chose a Western instrument to provide the basic rhythm for their performance.

Zulu teenagers showed a strong group identity in the process of music making. Afrikaans children were more individualistic and creative when using music instruments (beating drum with maraca, playing drum with side of fist, using note cluster on piano as percussive element). Both groups, however, retained their cultural identity and there was no evidence of assimilation.

### **Limitations**

The sample used in this study was small; it would need to be bigger to make more conclusive findings. It is also easier for a group of novice musicians to make use of traditional Zulu instruments rather than Western instruments because they are mostly used in a percussive way. Formal training is not necessarily needed to play them. This could have prevented the participants from using typical Western instruments.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

It is suggested that further research should be done with a group of children from an even deeper rural area who do not have (direct) contact with Afrikaans/Western teenagers. Research should be done to analyze more groups from different backgrounds in the Afrikaans and Zulu cultures. Another group that could also be added would be children from the Christian Afrikaans schools that are still mostly racially segregated. The same procedure should be followed to determine whether acculturation has taken place and what the level of influence is.

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