

Chronic failure at school as a source of shame — Hip hop culture as a space for adolescents to cope with discrimination

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Zusammenfassung:

Chronisches Schulversagen als Ursache für Scham –

Hip Hop als jugendkultureller Raum um mit Diskriminierung umzugehen

Der Artikel illustriert allgemeine Probleme der Emotionsentwicklung im Jugendalter und greift dabei chronisches Schulversagen als Ursache für Beschämung als spezielle Problematik der Altersphase Jugend in Leistungsgesellschaften auf. Dabei wird als eine mögliche Bewältigungsstrategie die Hinwendung zur Hip-Hop-Kultur beschrieben.

Nach einem kurzen Überblick über die aktuelle Diskussion der Jugendforschung wird die aktive Rolle der Heranwachsenden im Prozess der Sozialisation und der Identitätsentwicklung betont. Der Fokus der Autoren liegt dabei auf marginalisierten Gruppen der Gesellschaft, die mit der Erfahrung von rassistischer und sozialer Diskriminierung umgehen müssen, die als Quelle verschiedener negativer Emotionen beschrieben werden. Es wird argumentiert, dass in unserer Leistungsgesellschaft chronisches Schulversagen und die damit verbundene Beschämung großen negativen Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit, des Selbstkonzepts und Selbstwertes hat. Die Adaption der Hip-Hop-Kultur, deren Wurzeln und wichtigsten Merkmale im Artikel skizziert werden, dient im diesem Zusammenhang als Bewältigungsstrategie da ihre innere Struktur es Jugendlichen ermöglicht einen Raum zu konstruieren, in dem sie Stolz und das Gefühl, respektiert zu werden, erleben können.

(...) Ich machte mir selbst Sorgen – darüber wie mein Leben verlief, ich war das Problemkind, das dauernd die Schule verschlief – schlecht im Beruf, verrufen im Betrieb und frech zum Chef, das zu oft weglief und seine Eltern anlog und langsam merkte, dass die Zeit an ihm vorbeizog. (...) Danach geh ich heim und reime bis spät in die Nacht hinein um meinen Frust abzubauen – als Nichtsnutz habe ich einen Plan einen Traum, Beats von hier bis in die Ewigkeit (...) (Excerpt of the rap song *Nichtsnutz*: MASSIVE TÖNE 1997)

This article intends to illustrate the connection between the problems of emotion development during adolescence in general as well as the experience of chronic failure in school as a source of humiliation in particular and hip hop culture as a possible coping strategy. For this purpose we give a short review about the current discussion on adolescence and emphasize the active part of youth in the processes of socialisation and the development of identity. Our focus of interest is put on youth of marginalized groups of the society, who have to face the experiences of racial or social discrimination which are described as a source of various negative feelings. We argue that chronic failure in school and related experiences of shame are important sources of humiliation in our achievement-orientated society, which have a big impact on the development of personality, self-image and self-concept. The adaptation of hip hop culture serves as a coping strategy because its internal structure enables youths to construct a space where the emotion of pride and the feeling of being respected can be experienced.

Youth culture has become a topic of scientific discussions in various disciplines in the last three decades. These discussions—mainly in sociology, education science and cultural studies—focus on the historical development, internal structure and the relationship between the cultural mainstream and youth culture. The emergence of youth cultures is generally analysed as a result of transformations in society. The somewhat older idea that sees the function of new youth cultural styles as being a ‘magical solution’ (CLARKE 1979) for problems in various areas (family, school, work und unemployment) seems to have been forgotten.

This article can be seen in this older tradition because it intends to illustrate the connection between the problems related to the development of emotions and emotion regulation in adolescence and the creation or adoption of a youth culture in the example of today’s most popular style: hip hop.

Adolescence is commonly seen as a period in the human lifespan in which fundamental changes take place, often accompanied by times of crisis for the individual. Youths have to face difficult challenges while their social focus shifts from family to school and peer relationships, their bodies change quickly and various new experiences and identity processes lead to new emotions as well as to a rising need of emotion regulation and control. Dealing with these challenges is sometimes especially difficult for the children of marginalized urban groups. They have to learn the ‘code of the street’ (ANDERSON 1994) in order to handle themselves in a street-oriented environment. This code is a set of rules concerning the distribution of an important resource in this context: respect. In the social structure of urban ghettos the feeling of being respected and the connected emotion of pride about one’s own abilities are highly valued. Those who are not respected and who are not able to respond in a proper way to the often violent challenges on the street will continuously have a hard time in their daily life. The constant struggle for the commodity that is “hard-won but easily lost” (ANDERSON 1994, 82) is often a violent one. The teenagers who have to face it are confronted with feelings of fear, despair and hopelessness.

Emotions help individuals find orientation in the world. If these emotions about the world and one’s own position within it constantly evoke negative feelings like fear or shame, they can lead to attempts to alter the situation. Basic emotional needs like the feeling of safety in the neighbourhood, the feeling of being part of a group that cares or the development of self-esteem are difficult to reach for many ghetto youths. The marginalised position inside society

and the experiences of discrimination can be a constant source for feelings of shame, contributing to a negative self-image. A popular way of dealing with these emotional deficits leads to the formation of violent youth gangs. Another, more peaceful and creative manner of regulating these emotional problems can be seen in the creation of hip hop groups. As will be shown later in the article, these offer a space that satisfies various emotional demands. Within hip hop, youths construct a positive identity in a process which can be seen as a “real time coping response” (SPENCER, FEGLEY, HARPALANI 2003, 183) to the restrictions of their environment. This article intends to show that youths not only use the culturally available means for these identity processes, but that they also construct new ones in order to find an arena for the development of self-esteem.

1. Emotional development during adolescence

While the traditional view on adolescent development describes this phase in life as a painful and forced adaptation to the rules and standards of society, later tendencies in research on adolescence place a stronger focus on agency. While a part of the discussion tends to abandon the concept of socialisation and to prefer the idea of life-long development (ELDER 1994), others put focus on the term ‘self-socialisation’. Socialisation in this concept is seen as an active process of dealing with the given opportunities in which the individual not only reacts to society, but also creates a space of his/ her own (FERCHHOFF, NEUBAUER 1997). The developing teenager is no longer seen as a passive receptor of socialisation messages. He or she is rather an active participant in a process that changes both the individual and his / her environment. This means that children and adolescents give meaning to themselves and to their environment. They construct their own reasons and goals for their actions (ZINNECKER 2000). This enables the formation of a specific youth space that consists of meanings and explanations which are not necessarily similar to those of the adult society. More attention should be paid to this tendency in research on adolescent emotion development. The specific cultural standards of dealing with emotions, of expressing or suppressing them and the attitudes towards certain feelings are subjects of constant and fluent changes. Most of these changes occur first among the younger generation of a society, who adjust their emotions to the requirements of a changing environment.

The development of emotions and emotion regulation during adolescence is deeply connected to the developmental tasks societies impose on their younger generations. The reorganisation of social relations is an important task in Western societies. Youths are expected to gain autonomy, reorganise their parent relationship and establish a network of peers as well as heterosexual relationships (OFFER et al. 1988; YOUNISS, SMOLLAR 1989; FEND 1998; 2000). Furthermore, they have to deal with quickly increasing demands in school or the pressures of integrating into work life. The next part of this article will pay particular attention to problems that arise in school.

Leaving the safety of family and attempting to find friends can lead to negative emotions connected to feelings of insecurity concerning identity and the restructuring of one’s self-concept. Sometimes this leads to a certain degree of egocentrism or even to a period of a narcissistic retraction (GOOSSENS, SEIFFGE-KRENKE, MARCOEN 1992; SEIFFGE-KRENKE 2002). However, developing peer relationships also demands that juveniles learn emotional competence quickly. The developing identity is sustained and reinforced within the peer group. Several studies illustrate the increasing importance of peer relationships as coping resources and the decreasing relevance of the family in this area (PARKER, GOTTMAN 1989; SEIFFGE-KRENKE 1995; FEND 1998). The peer group also fulfils an important function for initiating romantic relationships in that it forms a network that helps teenagers to communicate across gender borders and to avoid direct rejection (NIEDER, SEIFFGE-KRENKE 2001). Adolescents have to develop strong empathy skills quickly in order to be able to back up each other. Connected to this high level of empathy is also a serious concern about others’

views towards one's own personality (SEIFFGE-KRENKE 2002). Another important part of youth development is the attainment of self esteem. This seems to be especially true for the North American context, where self-esteem is described as a central concern (MESQUITA, MARKUS 2004, 342).

As a summary of these different strings of development, the adolescent is confronted with the goal of reaching an emotionally balanced personality (FRIEDLMEIER 1999, 36). This goal implies the development of strategies of emotion regulation on different levels.

2. School: A social institution and its meaning for the process of the development of identity and personality

On the following pages, it will be illustrated that school can be perceived as a social institution which on the one hand has to integrate adolescents while on the other hand having to distribute them to hierarchically organised (school) systems and professions. This area of conflict between the different functions of school has been extensively discussed with varying emphases in school-related research (TILLMANN 2000; JÜRGENS 1998; FEND 1997; HELMKE 1992). Here, the focus will be put on achievement and the connected allocation function as a potential reason for stigmatisation or marginalisation of pupils. In doing so, the central influence of the self-evaluative emotion of shame (in the sense of dishonour) will be illustrated. Humiliation as a negative emotional experience after failure at school is thus characterised as a decrease in self-esteem and the construction of a new style of youth-culture like hip hop is understood as coping strategy of adolescents.

In our culture, school is the single most important social institution in the life of an adolescent. During nine full-time and usually some more part-time years at school, integration as well as qualification and thus professional positioning is accomplished. Apart from the family, school as a 'gate' to the adult world is the biggest and most important socialising entity of adolescents. Growing up without school is unthinkable as without school attendance and graduation, an individual is on the verge of exclusion from social life even before it actually starts (NYSSSEN 1995). Due to the heightened importance of school leaving certificates in connection with school's selective function, an emotional stress is produced that becomes noticeable in the experience or anticipation of the self-evaluative emotion of shame. On the other hand, competitive processes in school can have a markedly positive effect through the achievement of good marks or explicit praise from teachers, which is then mediated by the self-evaluative emotion of pride. Here, however, the emotion of shame shall be studied in more detail, as it is understood to be a central emotional quality of stigmatisation and marginalisation which has to be countered by specialised strategies of regulation and coping.

Failure at school as a source of shame and its influence on the development of personality

Through the self-evaluative emotion of shame, individual judges his/her own actions on the basis of specific cultural norms and values and thus feels ashamed if these are violated (BARRETT 1995; HOLODYSKI 2004). From the point of view of emotion theory, achievement as selection criterion is perceived as norm or measure which in case of failure to reach leads to exclusion from class or even society and thus serves as triggering condition for shame. The basic human desire for belonging and attachment has close connections with the self-evaluative emotions, as shame serves to illustrate a disruption of or threat to the desired attachment while the emotion of pride signals a bond towards a certain group and / or strengthens it.

The institution school is supposed to foster processes of integration and belonging to the respective society. To be able to shape this process satisfactorily, adolescents have to accept the structures and demands of school and integrate achievement as a desirable aim into their motive structure. Moreover, achievement has to be understood as criterion for future professional positioning and thus as allocation of status. Once achievement in school has been

adopted as an important goal by the pupil, the self-evaluative emotions shame and pride will be closely connected to achievement. Underachievement is then perceived as failure to reach the norm and exclusion and will therefore be a trigger for shame. While single and isolated or at least rare experiences of underachievement can have rather positive effects on motivation (PEKRUN 2002), continuous failure can lead to discouragement, depression, aggression, aversion against school, negative self-worth, etc, which in our opinion can be attributed to the ongoing experience of shame and the connected perceived stigmatisation and marginalisation (FEND 1997).

The psychotherapeutic, sociological and psychological literature has extensively documented that the experience of shame has different functions on a social level as well as significant influence on individual development (JACOBY 1997; SCHEFF 2003; 1998; 1988; SMITH 1983; NECKEL 1991; BARRETT 1995; TAGNEY 1995). On the one hand, the emotion is said to establish conformity which arises from fear of exclusion contrary to the basic desire for attachment. On the other hand, it serves to internalise cultural norms and values which are illustrated by negative social evaluation of individual behaviour. Apart from its meaning for behavioural organisation in a social system, the self-evaluative emotions appear to be of major importance for the development of personality which in turn partly takes place in school contexts and can be understood as *processing of self-related information* (TRAUTNER, LOHAUS 1985).

When shame is triggered in any specific situation, an appraisal of the self, its potentials or the concrete behaviour is always initiated. This appraisal can be performed by externals, in this case teachers or fellow pupils, but also by the individual itself. The evaluation of achievement is an element of the mentioned self-related information that is part of the build-up of a self-concept which must not be understood as a purely cognitive process of information processing. Evaluations of one's own person will always be accompanied by emotional qualities (LAMBRICH 1987), in which shame and pride can be seen as exemplary emotions of self-evaluation. On the one hand, they are triggered by the said process of evaluation, on the other hand their experience influences an individual's personality and especially its perception of its value—its *self-worthiness*. While there are only a handful of studies supporting this thesis for the emotion of pride (ALESSANDRI, LEWIS 1996; HAMBLY 2003; KÖVECSÉS 1989), numerous publications from different scientific disciplines exist on the effects of shame on self-esteem and the development of personality (LEWIS, M. 1992; JACOBY 1997; SCHORE 1998; GILBERT 1998; SCHEFF 1998; RETZINGER 1998; TAGNEY 1995). They all agree on the enormous negative effect of shame: experiences of shame tend to be avoided by an individual at all costs and shame also marks behaviour, abilities and capacities as 'worthy' or 'unworthy' from earliest childhood days. The evaluation of the self in connection with the high effect potential bestows an enormous influence on self-esteem and the complete process of personality development on the emotions of shame and pride (JACOBY 1997; SCHEFF 2003; LEWIS 1971).

Chronic failure, stigmatisation, avoidance of the achievement principle in school as regulation of experienced humiliation

Already GOFFMAN (1967) and SIMMEL (1983) have pointed out that the self-concept, i. e. to know who one is and which abilities, behaviours and competencies mark one's own person, is evolving by an evaluative process that is accompanied by emotions. The feeling of humiliation or the fear of disregard was in the focus of their considerations. In this context, GOFFMAN (1967) sees the reasons for shame about oneself in specific attributes that a person ascribes to him/herself and perceives as being disgraceful. In a comparable manner, SIMMEL (1983) describes shame, resulting from the knowledge of one's own insufficiencies which in addition raise public attention, as an emotion that can become a lasting part of an individual's life. The above-mentioned role that school can play in this process arises from the fact that the

evaluation of achievement in school is typically carried out in a public and socially comparative manner. School education takes place in an area of tension between integration (inclusion) and qualification, allocation and therefore selection. Graduation certificates as a criterion for social positioning (integration or allocation respectively) and statements on individual capabilities render achievement and its assessment the most central triggers for shame and pride.

Evaluations of achievement can be perceived as statements of a pupil's own abilities and capacities and thus become part of his/her self-concept. Thus, in the case of chronic failure, the development of a negative self-concept along with respective connected dimensions like ability self-concept, self-efficacy, and conceptions of the personal future goals, action control, test anxiety and self-acceptance can be assumed (FEND 1997).

We see this disturbance of the emotional and psychic sensitivities of adolescents as a triggering factor for the turning to or the construction of new styles of youth culture in this paper. By turning away from school structures as source for their self-affirmation and instead finding it for example in the competitive structures of hip hop, youths with a biography of school failure minimize the danger of humiliation and look for specific places or contexts in which they can prove their talents and abilities and thus experience pride as counter-emotion.

Towards a broad view of emotion regulation

Emotion regulation became a central topic in the discussion and research in various disciplines in the past three decades. Emotion regulation is generally used as a term for "(...) the selection and implementation of emotion responses and emotion related action strategies." (KITAYAMA, KARASAWA, MESQUITA 2004, 252). Emotions can be seen as primarily functional bio-cultural processes which organise and motivate human actions and reactions to events in the environment. Nevertheless, they constantly have to be controlled or regulated by the individual. Uncontrolled emotions or emotional expressions very often do not conform to social rules and can for this or other reasons obstruct the personal long-term and short-term goals. The emotions of shame and pride are of importance in this context because they are deeply connected to the values and standards of society. Of course emotion regulation is not only a task of the individual, but also a social phenomenon, for it takes place not only within but also between persons.

Furthermore, human emotions go along with specific pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Motivated by the anticipation of social reactions, the individual will regulate emotions and actions, e. g. in order to avoid feelings of shame and to attain a positive self-image through feelings of pride. In order to extend a positive feeling or to reach a more pleasant one, the individual can therefore try to regulate his/ her emotions or avoid situations that evoke negative emotions and seek situations known to elicit positive ones. This difference in the focus of regulation was pointed out by Lazarus and the two basic strategies have been termed 'emotion-focused regulation' and 'problem-focused regulation' (LAZARUS 1991). The case of youth and hip hop, which will be discussed in more detail below, is an example of problem-focused regulation.

Emotion regulation of teenagers is very often discussed with an emphasis on the styles of coping with the problems of adolescence. The research on today's growing significance of peer groups has shown that these groups are the most important sources of intimacy for today's teenagers. They have taken on a number of functions that families previously assumed. The search for solutions within a friendship or a peer group is the most common coping strategy for Western youth (SEIFFGE-KRENKE 1992; 1995). Peer groups are the dominating space for the experience of intense positive and negative emotions and the prevalent resource for the social regulation of emotions (ZIMMERMANN 2001; 1999; LEMPERS, CLARK-LEMPERS 1992). Social regulation of emotion among youths means that they mutually validate their experiences, pressures and strains as well as interests and points of views. The

definition of coping as SEIFFGE-KRENKE and others use it is based on LAZARUS, who defines coping as “(...) problem-solving efforts made by an individual when the demands he/she faces are highly relevant (...) and tax his/her adaptive resources” (LAZARUS et al. 1974, 29). Most of the discussion about emotion regulation has been a discussion in psychology or developmental physiology. That they focus mainly on the individual is due to these disciplines’ areas of research. Constant feelings of frustration, humiliation and hopelessness can lead to different pathological developments in the individual. They can also be the reason for collective praxis, e. g. the creation of new cultural spaces that allow for the development of a more positive self-image and for the daily experience of related emotions like pride. The interplay between emotion regulation and processes of cultural change or the genesis of new cultural styles has received little academic attention in the past. Only in the last years have there been attempts to link cultural coping resources and adolescents’ identity processes. One such example is the work of SPENCER and colleagues (2003) about identity construction among African American youth that illustrates how it is a resource to cope with the restrictions of their life in a poor black neighbourhood. There are also two studies that examine the function of graffiti as a creative means of youth coping with the collective trauma of YITZHAK RABIN’s assassination in Israel (LUZZATTO, JACOBSEN 2001; KLINGMAN, SHALEY, PEARLMAN 2000).

3. Hip hop: Arena for emotion regulation through identity construction

The following part intends to give an insight into the socio-cultural origins and the internal structure of hip hop to show the reasons for the enormous popularity it enjoys with teenagers all over the world. This popularity is grounded in hip hop’s ability to supply a number of emotional needs and to regulate long-term emotional deficits.

Invented in the urban jungle

Hip hop is a term¹ for a global youth culture² that consists of rap music, break-dancing and graffiti writing. Hip hop was invented in the New York Bronx during the 1970s. At that time the Bronx enjoyed the ill fame of being a symbol of urban decline (ROSE 1997, 148). Burned-out buildings were a favoured setting for movie productions about urban violence or even about a rapid breakdown of civilisation as a theme (‘Fort Apache’, ‘Wolfen’, ‘Koyaanisqatsi’). At that time no one would have thought that, of all places, the Bronx would give birth to a new cultural phenomenon that would conquer young people’s minds all over the world in the following three decades. However, the post-industrial urban ghetto can be seen as a necessary and central general framework for the development of hip hop culture. The character of the Bronx as a ghetto in the urban environment of New York City has moulded hip hop culture from its early days until its glamorous present³. The location of hip hop origins in this setting gives it a deep-seated symbolism of urbanity. The adaptation of hip hop can, however, be seen as a way to create an urban identity or a link to urbanity even outside any real urban setting of life (KLEIN, FRIEDRICH 2003, 100). Another important function of this inherent urbanity was worked out by STOKES, who showed that “(...) the identification with urban genres provides the means by which rural-urban migrants can transform themselves from peripheralised proletarians to urbanites (...)” (STOKES 1994, 4). The feeling of participation in a vivid and mainly positive cultural force can give the individual great satisfaction, which can in turn serve as a compensation for other problematic parts of daily life. In the case of hip hop, the symbolism of an urban ghetto style is also a

¹ For the history and origins of the term see DORSEY (2000, 327) and POSCHARD (1996, 154).

² A first overview of the global significance of hip hop was given by MITCHELL (2001).

³ See VERLAN (2003, 106ff.) for a breakdown of the big influence of the ghetto-culture image on hip hop adoption in France and Germany.

symbolism of (male)⁴ strength and success. Those who survive in the 'urban jungle' demonstrate their toughness and their cleverness.

Hip hop's early protagonists were mostly youths with African-American or Hispanic family background (LIPSITZ 1999; MITCHELL 1996; TOOP 1992). They hold a position in society once described as "structural outsiderism" (KAYA 2001, 48), another important factor for hip hop's rise to global popularity. Hip hop created a "new definition of cool" (LOH, GÜNGÖR 2002, 23) which supported a positive identification with primordial attributes previously experienced as a stigma like a non-white skin colour or a social background in an urban ghetto. Hip hop became a space for those who felt constricted by the circumstances of their lives.

The internal structure of hip hop

Not only the socio-cultural and historical background of hip hop contributed to its success, but also the internal structure underlying rap music, break dancing and graffiti writing is central to understanding the global phenomenon and its potential to solve problems arising from the specific settings in which adolescents grow up. This can be demonstrated by referring to two main pillars of hip hop, the artistic principles of *sampling*, which can be seen as bricolage, and the social principle of *battle*.

Sampling as a tool for the bricolage of an identity

An important task for developing adolescents is the acquisition of identity. Identity should be seen as a constant process, a constant change which defines for the individual "who am I?" and of course "to whom do I belong?" It is not only a matter of the individual's self-esteem, but also a matter of finding a cultural identity. This can be difficult, especially for children of migrant families or other minority groups. They have to try to combine different aspects of the different cultural meaning systems in which they grow up.

The first hip hop Disk Jockeys (DJs), namely KOOL DJ HERC, GRANDMASTER FLASH and AFRICA BAMBATAA invented most of the techniques that made hip hop the perfect arena for the construction of the multidimensional identity it is today. They organised block parties in their Bronx neighbourhood and introduced the techniques of *cutting* and *sampling* to pop music. *Cutting* was the basis for the so-called breakbeats, later becoming the rhythmic fundament of a large part of pop music in the last three decades. The DJ uses only selected rhythmic parts of a record which he can extend by putting the same record on his second turntable. This fundamental beat was enriched by short vocal or other acoustic pieces, so-called *samples*. They were either taken from other records or recorded on the street (e. g. a police siren). DJs started to combine different styles of music and therefore created something completely new. They became musicians and authors in this time. Music was a material for new music to them. In this new music the old song was negated, conserved and elevated (POSCHARDT 1996, 168)⁵.

The hip hop battle as a source of respect

The MC (*Master of Ceremony*) builds upon this newly constructed music for his rap. In the early days of rap music, the raps consisted mostly of rhymes that called on the crowd to dance. These rhymes soon became more elaborate and the MCs started to rap all kinds of stories from their lives. In the words of CHUCK D, a member of the rap group PUBLIC ENEMY, rap became the CNN of the black ghetto.

⁴ Hip hop has always been a mostly male phenomenon. However, of course there are many female rappers, writers and dancers. For the influence of women in hip hop's early years, see GUEVARA (1996).

⁵ A very similar structure can be observed in Breakdance, a dance which developed in the early block parties in the Bronx. Breakdance borrows from different elements of African and African-American dances as well as from East Asian martial arts and the Brazilian 'dance-fight' capoeira (MITCHELL 2001a, 7; GUEVARA 1996, 50; GEORGE 1998, 15pp).

Due to the explicit content of many rap lyrics, hip hop is very often associated with the glorification of violence and criminal behaviour. Interpersonal violence was and still is one of the biggest problems in the Bronx and other poor inner-city communities. Young people growing up in this environment have to learn a set of rules which ANDERSON (1994) calls 'the code of the street'. This code is a set of rules that defines how individuals attain what they believe to be most important in their daily life on the streets: the respect of others. 'Being respected' in this context implies a feeling of safety, which is needed in a neighbourhood where police are perceived as enemies. Respect becomes a matter of successfully facing violent challenges on the street or of challenging others. It is also very often connected to the possession of expensive clothes or jewelry. Of course, this kind of respect is precarious, because his/ her possessions make the owner a potential victim of others who want to gain respect by attaining trophies. A pair of sneakers can have a high symbolic value and be the reason for serious fights (ANDERSON 1994, 88).

The demonstration of material wealth is also an important part of hip hop, but the competition for respect also found a new arena within hip hop culture which helped to reduce violent conflicts. In the early days of hip hop, the *MCs* and *DJs* and also the *breakers* and *writers* began to compete against each other with their skills. The *hip hop battle* was invented and developed its own rules. DJ and producer AFRICA BAMBATAA is sometimes called the 'father of hip hop culture' because he appealed to the youths of his neighbourhood to battle each other in the artistic disciplines of hip hop and to put away the weapons of gang warfare. Hip hop crews developed who recruited their members from the existing street gangs. They provided a new social support to the youths of the Bronx. Hip hop can thus be seen as a space where street youths find a creative way of dealing with the frustrations and handicaps of their situation and cope with the emotions of hopelessness, shame, fear and lack of self-esteem. The hip hop battle became a way to gain respect in a peaceful way, as hip hop kids are respected for their *skills* and their *style*. They were able to train skills they could be proud of within their peer group without constantly risking their life for respect.

A *writer* earns respect and becomes famous on the streets by demonstrating an elaborated artistic style painting graffiti-*pieces* in highly visible spaces that are difficult and dangerous to reach. A *DJ* convinces the crowd with his well-selected material and the mixing skills. A rapper needs flow and rhetorical talent. A rap battle is about boasting and *dissing* at a rhetoric level as high as possible:

(...) *Nein Typ, du hast nichts auf dem Kasten / Dein Bass auf Diät und deine Beats war'n Fasten / Mit deinen Partys am Pool chillst du voll cool / Doch dein Reim rollt nicht mal mit 'nem Rollstuhl* (...) (Excerpt from the Rapsong *Geh bitte*, ABSOLUTE BEGINNER 1998).

Local adoptions of a global phenomenon

Hip hop has conquered the minds of adolescents all over the world in the last thirty years. This is very often described as the product of a US-cultural imperialism⁶. This position becomes unconvincing, however, when the local specification and variation of hip hop are carefully examined. The rhythmic fundament of today's rap music is very often an artistic link between individual or group history and its imagined future, between local identity and global belonging: it is an easy way of expressing multidimensional cultural identity. KAYA (2001) shows this in his impressive work about Turkish hip hop youth in Berlin. Turkish youth can use their ethnicity as a strategic instrument for the demonstration of authenticity and construction of an identity which combines the different worlds. KAYA identifies several emotional problems and paradoxes which hip hop helps to solve or regulate. The youths have a strong desire for autonomy from the traditional world of their parents on the one hand but also the need for collectivity on the other. They want to participate in global urban culture, but

⁶ For a critical summary of this position see ANDROUTSOPOULOS (1999), KLEIN, FRIEDRICH (2003).

at the same they want to be proud of their (ethnic) roots. They may experience a nostalgic feeling towards the history of their families in Turkey and also an anxious desire to be connected to a yet undetected future. The rap music of these German-Turkish groups often contains samples of traditional Turkish Arabesk music which expresses a: “(...) dialogue between past and future, between homeland and country of residence, between different worlds of meaning, between various life-worlds, between global winds and local resistance, between ‘roots’ and ‘routes’, between here and there (...)” (KAYA 2001, 174). Another example is found in Amsterdam, where children of Surinamese immigrants use rap music and hip hop culture to redefine their cultural identity in a “complicated process of evaluation and reinterpretation of one’s culture and traditions” (SANSONE 1995, 127). They use hip hop in order to perceive themselves not only as a part of a marginalised, poor migrant population in a country that confronts them with racism and few chances, but also as members of a successful global urban style, where ‘being black’ means ‘being cool’. Other impressive examples are given by MITCHELL, who sees global rap as a ‘resistance vernacular’ which is used to construct local cultural identity and articulate it in a global style. This seems to be true in a number of places, ranging from Greenland, where the rap band *Nuuk Posse* raps in the Inuit-language to protest the domination of Danish in Greenland, to French rappers using the VERLAN slang of the suburbs for their critique of racism, to Maori youth, whose most important reason to learn the Maori language is to be able to rap in Maori (MITCHELL 1999).

Summary: The rise of a youth-culture as a way of creating a space for positive emotion experiences

The history and the internal structure of hip hop turn this youth culture into an ideal space for the experience of positive emotions. Hip hop has remained especially popular among the youth of marginalized parts of various societies, but during the last three decades it has also become the largest mainstream pop culture. It developed into a very complex multidimensional phenomenon with different sub-genres attractive to different target groups. The innovative moment in hip hop can be found on two levels.

First is the principle of sampling, invented by the early hip hop DJs. Thus, it became a tool for multi-level identity constructions on a musical level, used by teenagers to connect the various influences in their environment. Sampling constructs spaces in which the tensions between an urge for local authenticity and the desire for participation in a global cultural interaction can be released. In these spaces, an identity which allows the teenagers to be proud of their cultural origins and escape the restrictions of these origins at the same time can be constructed.

Second is the hip hop battle, the way of competing with artistic styles and skills. Central to the hip hop battle is the possibility of gaining respect for the individual and the individual’s peer group. It is a way to experience feelings of pride and, for many youths, nearly the only way to do so.

Hip hop was invented by youths who must have been seriously unsatisfied with their daily life and their chances for the future. They were looking for fun and for possibilities to develop their talents and to be proud of them. They created a youth culture that conquered the world afterwards because it was adopted by thousands of teenagers who had the same desires.

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