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Weller, Wivian

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The Feminine Presence in Youth (Sub)Cultures: the Art of Becoming Visible¹

Are girls, in fact, for reasons which we could discover, really not active or present in youth sub-cultures? Or has something in the way this kind of research is done rendered them invisible? (Mc Robbie/Garber, 1975: 209)

1 Feminine 'Invisibility' in Youth (Sub)Cultures

Both in studies on hip hop as well as on youth in general, there is a great gap with regard to the feminine presence in political-cultural manifestations. Do young female adolescents make up a minority in the hip hop movement, in other aesthetic-music movements and other associative forms, such as crews and gangs? If our criterion is the existing bibliography, then we should affirm they do. Since the first studies carried out by sociologists at The Chicago School (among others Trasher, 1963; Whyte, 1996; Cohen, 1955) and by members of the Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham (among others Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1997; Clarke, 1975; Cohen, 1979) to more recent studies, among others, in Germany (i.e. Baacke, 1987; Schäffer, 1996; Hill, 1996; Tertilt, 1996; Nohl, 2001), in Portugal (see Pais, 1993, 1999) and in Brazil (among others Caiafa, 1985; Vianna, 1985, 1997; Costa, 1993; Kemp, 1993; Abramo, 1994; Abreu, 1995; Xavier, 1999), there have been few references to be found or none at all with regard to female participation in these movements (among the studies of both gender, especially the work of McRobbie/Garber, 1975; Willis, 1990 are significant). Papers on youths and on youth culture that encompass the category youth as a whole, a category that does not distinguish between young female and young male teens, are widespread. Considering the importance of these authors' works, fundamental for consolidating the field of youth studies, there is yet one more problem in addition to representing the category youth as a whole: analyses on corporeal aesthetics, style of attire, music preferences and the teens' overall outlook on life, among other aspects, have been mainly carried out on the basis of participant observation and interviews with male

1 First Published in: *Revista Estudos Feministas* [online]. 2006, vol.1, Special Edition, p. 1-19. In: http://socialsciences.scielo.org/pdf/s_ref/v1nse/scs_a03.pdf. This version was slightly changed by the Author.

youths. Indeed, ever since the studies aimed at understanding the styles Ted Boy, Skinhead, Rock-n'-Roll or other more recent styles such as Funk and Hip Hop, these cultural practices and their forms of representation were analyzed from the standpoint of the male members of these groups². The few references to young female teens in these papers have to do with affectivity and sexuality in the crews and gangs (Trasher, 1963; Xavier, 1999) or with teenage maternity (Vilar/Gaspar, 1999; Willis, 1990).

Concerning the teenage girls' invisibility or the one-sided focus on issues related to sexuality³, to gender relations and to maternity, in the few studies on the female presence in youth culture, McRobbie and Garber write:

"With the possible exception of sexual deviance, women constituted an uncelebrated social category, for radical and critical theorists. This general invisibility was of course cemented by the social reaction to the more extreme manifestations of youth sub-cultures. The popular press and media concentrated on the sensational incidents associated with each culture (...) One direct consequence of the fact that it is always the violent aspects of a phenomenon which qualify as newsworthy is that these are precisely the areas of subcultural activity from which women have tended to be excluded." (McRobbie/Garber, 1975: 212).

Viviane Magro's doctoral thesis entitled "Girls of Graffiti: Education, Adolescence, Identity and Gender in Contemporary Youth Cultures" constitutes one of the few studies regarding the female presence in youth cultures in Brazil⁴. Based on the analysis of data collected for her field study in Campinas (State of São Paulo), the author highlights a set of elements that emerge from experiencing a juvenile culture environment and from the processes that construct what she calls "identity instances," given that identity – according to Stuart Hall – can only be seen as a "moveable feast," (HALL, 1996: 598) always "becoming, constantly in authorization" (Magro, 2003: 188). In addition to the identification with the hip hop movement, Magro points out the social commitment, the feeling of belonging to a family, of being oneself, of having friends, of being black or white and of being female and enjoying hip hop as central elements experienced collectively as adolescents and spray painters. To the author,

"The girls' graffiti seems to be an expression of the complex experience of being a woman, black, white, poor and socially excluded in contemporary society. Produced and inscribed in downtown Campinas, this graffiti marks the feelings of girls who experience the condition of generational and gender exclusion. Graffiti art and the social proposal of the hip hop movement provide them with self narratives that are more affirmative than themselves." (Magro, 2003: 175).

2 And often from the standpoint of the male researchers.

3 This focus on issues regarding sexuality is often driven by the names given to the female groups, such as, for example, the punk style group in the Mexican capital which is represented by the name "Shaken Virginity" (Urteaga, 1996).

4 This is a doctoral thesis defended at the Faculty of Education at UNICAMP in December, 2003, in which I participated as a panel member.

Before examining the experience of other female groups in the hip hop movement, we will briefly discuss some concepts that aim towards the understanding and the analysis of the distinct juvenile manifestations.

2 Cultures, Subcultures, and Juvenile Styles

According to Bernhard Schäffers (1998: 161), the notion of "youth culture" as a part of the culture of a society developed as youth came to be seen as a specific social and generative category, as well as in the autonomy acquired by this age group. Although there is no specific definition for the concept of subculture (see also Cuche, 1999: 99-105), it can be understood as referring to an alternative culture, but also as an expansion of the very concept of culture, which is not associated only with a set of predominant values, norms, and traditions in a given society, but which involves every aspect of a determined group's quotidian life (Schäffers, 1998: 163; Baacke, 1987: 99). Resorting to this broader view of the concept, Sarah Thorton (1996) introduces – alluding to Bordieu's concept of "cultural capital" –, the term "sub-cultural capital" in an attempt to deconstruct social hierarchies: in much the same way as "cultural capital" is cultivated by means of the acquisition of works of art and of books that load the shelves, "subcultural capital" will be boasted through CD collections or a specific hair style (see Fritzsche, 2003). However, some authors have criticized the concept of subculture diffused by the Chicago School and by CCCS in Birmingham, mainly with regard to juvenile groups. To Dieter Baacke (1987) as well as to Wilfried Ferchhoff and Georg Neubauer (1996) the term subculture suggests the existence of a superior culture, which ceases to be meaningful today, given the plurality of modes and styles, which are no longer specific for a certain culture, considering that they will be manifested in distinct locations and in distinct continents. At the same time the term triggers depreciatory associations and prompts the belief that we are dealing with specific social crusts that must be singled out or differentiated in order to be better controlled. According to these authors, "juvenile culture" or "juvenile cultures" would be the most adequate concept because it broadens the possibility for understanding the range of juvenile manifestations, their styles or ways of life that have been created and re-created in different locations and social contexts.

Such an appropriation of cultural styles in adolescence and youth is seen in the 1970's and 1980's bibliography as a "magical solution" (Clarke, 1975) for problems that arise in other sectors (family, school, work) and as a form of resistance for youths of social classes that do not have great perspectives for the future (Baacke, 1987: 104). More recent studies associate the importance of cultural styles in adolescence to the tendencies of the individual to

de-institutionalize, of social classes or crusts to individualize, and of the juvenile condition to undergo structural change (Schäffer, 1996: 30). The cultural styles are thus interpreted as a reaction to the changes that are taking place globally in complex societies.

However, the juvenile condition as space-time, in which lifestyles are discovered and experimented, generational experiences are constituted, identities are constructed and/or reconstructed, has been scarcely explored by these authors who interpret juvenile cultures mainly as responses or solutions to quotidian problems, such as ethnic or class inequalities. Hans Joas signals to the risks or consequences of this type of interpretation, which entails the notion that all social actions are necessarily rational:

“There are at least three aspects imputed to all the action theories that are based on a specific type of rational action – regardless of whether they conceive rationality in a restricted or broad sense, in a utilitarian or normative manner: a) the conception that the actors are able to act with precision (*zielgerichtetes Handeln*); b) that they have control over their bodies; c) that they are autonomous in relation to people and their social environment. From this perspective, the actors' reduced concentration in a certain action, the loss of or the decrease in the ability to control the body, and also the loss or abdication of the individual's autonomy, prompt the impression that the actors are scarcely or not at all rational, consequently reducing the likelihood that their actions should be classified as rational. Defenders of this conception are well aware, however, that the aspects imputed to this model of rational action hardly exist in concrete actions. The limited validity for such preconditions is eventually understood not as their own theoretical flaw but as that of the actors.” (Joas, 1996: 216-217, our translation).

The analysis of juvenile cultures within different contexts thus requires theoretical alternatives to such a utilitarian model of action, often distant from the empirical reality of the youths in the study. According to Karl Mannheim (1964a) the experiences that have not yet been conceptualized and/or theorized ought to be seen as atheoretical and not as slightly rational or even irrational:

“Aesthetic or religious "experiences" are not shapeless or amorphous; rather, they are *sui generis* and radically different from theoretical ones. It is up to the researcher to reflect upon the real content of these forms, upon what they inform, without violating their individual character, but rather to translate them into the theory, or yet to encompass them by means of logical forms. This is the purpose of theoretical research, a reality-seizing process that signals back towards the initial pre-theoretical stages, towards the level of quotidian experience.” (Weller et al., 2002).

According to Mannheim's proposal, there is a need for research that aims not only at the analysis of atheoretical experiences which lack theoretical reflection, but mainly at understanding the *modus operandi* and the practical meaning of these actions within their specific contexts, for teens, both female and

male (see Bourdieu, 1999; Bohnsack/Nohl, 2003)⁵. José Pais underscores the importance of a more dynamic reflection on the juvenile cultures, one "that targets specific ways of life and quotidian practices whereby certain meanings and values are expressed not only at the institutional level but also at the level of everyday quotidian life" (1993: 55).

Finalizing this topic, we might ask ourselves if female 'invisibility' or the absence of studies on female participation in juvenile cultures within the field of juvenile studies would not be associated with such a notion of juvenile culture as a form of protest and resistance, that is, with such a utilitarian conception of action. From a superficial and stereotypical viewpoint, some female juvenile cultures do not seem to demonstrate an attitude of protest or resistance against ethnic or class inequalities. To some authors, these styles and forms of expression are also seen as scarcely rational and as actions that aim solely at the consumption of group-specific products (for example: the activities of Backstreet Boys' or Spice Girls' fan groups). This may have been one of the reasons for the sparse attention and reflection on girls' participation, not only from juvenile culture specialists, but also from feminist theoreticians.

3 The Invisibility of Youth Cultures in Feminist Studies

Some authors have criticized the lack of research concerning the female presence in juvenile cultures or subcultures, the role these groups play in the transition from adolescence to adulthood and in the building of ethnic and gender identity (see McRobbie/Garber, 1975; Fritzsche, 2003a). However, it seems evident that the cultural practices for the adolescent and youth age group also continue to be overlooked in feminist studies in Brazil and in other countries.

According to Kathleen Karlyn (2003), feminists concerned with the future generation of youths/teens are not to be obliged to defend juvenile cultures unconditionally, but ought to turn their attention and interest to the universe of production, consumption and incorporation of cultural manifestations, concentrating efforts, for example, on analyzing magazines, films, TV shows, music groups and other products that specifically target the juvenile public. There is a need for more studies that endeavor to comprehend appropriation and re-elaboration of the cultural products in the teens' distinct social contexts. Contentions in the aesthetic-musical field aiming to challenge the traditional roles attributed to the male and female genders in our societies that is, the contributions that these manifestations have been making in the

5 For theoretical-methodological alternatives to the utilitarian action model see Bohnsack/Nohl 2003; and Fritzsche 2003b.

process of negotiating the existing contradictions in patriarchal cultures (Karlyn, 2003), also require further analysis and research. To Anne O'Connell a deeper discussion regarding the future of the feminist movement will necessitate a better view of the field of juvenile popular cultures, which have represented a space not only for building and re-building new styles and fads, but also for remodeling and appropriating a feminism buttressed by the teens' experience and outlook on the world. In addition, Catherine Lumby underscores the need to deconstruct the elitist attitude and even to reject altogether the principal means of communication and their productions:

"If feminism is to remain engaged with and relevant to the everyday lives of women, then feminists desperately need the tools to understand everyday culture. We need to engage with the debates in popular culture rather than taking an elitist and dismissive attitude toward the prime medium of communication today." (Lumby cited by Karlyn, 2003).

The importance of greater contiguity among feminists in different generations and of feminist studies being more receptive towards contemporary juvenile cultures would not only be seminal for a discussion on the directions feminism will take at the outset of this century, but would also foster new perspectives in the analysis and the understanding of what entails the juvenile condition. As Anja Achtenberg well puts it (cited by Fritzsche, 2003), youth studies continues operating on definitions long criticized in gender and race studies, that is, on a conception of youth as a pre-social category, characterized by the biological and emotional crisis experienced in the transition into adulthood. However, if we want to understand youth and how youth is actually experienced by adolescents and both male and female teens, it will be necessary to allot greater importance to the descriptions and narratives of the actors involved, associating this information to the theoretical-methodological reflection and to the rigorous analysis of empirical data:

"Like gender, and solely in relation to it, youth must be accurately and comprehensively defined. This construction of youth has not yet been empirically developed according to the same thoroughness, nor has it reflected theoretically as [the concept of] gender has." (Breitenbach, 2001: 169).

The theoretical perspectives and the results presented in studies on gender relations have contributed to the understanding that gender is not something we acquire naturally, but rather it is produced day by day. In other words, gender is constituted in an interactive and situational manner; it is (or is not) discussed within a specific context and interaction whereby those involved take on distinct gender representations (ibid: 168). According to Eva Breitenbach a similar conception can be developed in relation to youth or youths, which should not be seen only as a group of people of both sexes, as a phase of life or yet as a social institution. In this aspect feminist theories present an

important contribution to the deconstruction of the mainstream conceptions on youth as well as to a greater understanding of juvenile specificity⁶:

“Adolescence is no longer to be understood in terms of an evolutionary, linear and teleological form of subjectivity, but rather as a phase of experiences marked by bodies and genders, as a set of multiple references located socioculturally.” (Magro, 2003: 178).

Such a theoretical perspective promotes the researcher's greater sensibility and receptivity toward the distinct juvenile manifestations and their ways of contending with the current norms that regulate the societies in which they live, without falling prey to the risk of subsuming their practices into progressive or regressive categories (see Schwendter, 1971), as irrational or of a solely consumer nature. The distinct conceptions of youth and of experiencing youth will be clearly grasped when they have been analyzed from the perspective of gender and when they have been carried out on the basis of empirical reality, which implies the entire effort of reconstructing and interpreting the youths' concrete actions within the social contexts in which they lie.

4 The Art of Asserting Oneself in a 'Typically' Male Setting: The Female Presence in the Hip Hop Movement

I am a conscious woman, my value is not in my color, but in my mind⁷.

An argumentation similar to that found in the Birmingham studies in the 1960's and 1970's regarding the meanings of the cultural styles for working class youths (Hall/Jefferson, 1975), is observed in studies related to the hip hop movement in the 1990's. The definition of cultural style as an expression of resistance remains, but this time it is dissociated from class condition⁸: hip hop is interpreted as a "cultural expression of the African diaspora" and as an articulation of afrodescendant youths against racism and discrimination:

Hip hop is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity, and community. It is the tension between the cultural fractures produced by postindustrial oppression and the binding ties of black cultural expressivity that sets the critical frame for the development of hiphop (Rose, 1994: 21).

6 In particular the contribution given by queer theory, with Judith Butler is one of its main representatives (cf. Guacira Louro, 1995, 2001; Fritzsche, 2003b).

7 Dina Dee, "Grupo Visão de Rua" ("Street View Group") – cited in Magro, 2003: 105

8 Today this aspect, that is, the separation of hip hop from the issue of class, has been criticized by some authors. See interview with Bakari Kitwana in Caderno Mais, Folha de São Paulo, Aug. 18, 2002, p. 6-9.

Rose (1994) defines hip hop as a postmodern praxis associated with social unrest due to the increase in unemployment, and to the loss of social cohesion due to relocations that took place in New York City's re-urbanizing projects. Other authors see mainly in rap⁹ a continuity of pre-modern forms linked to history and oral memory (story telling), stemming from Griot culture in the western region of the African continent (Toop, 1992: 42-43). Regardless of the different claims to the origin of hip hop, what is evident is that this poetical-musical movement has spread worldwide and has prompted, mainly with rap, the emergence of a space for struggle and recognition: in these spaces youths express their creativity and organization as subjects in discourse, denouncing discrimination and deprivations experienced as Negroes and/or immigrants, transforming art and dialog into a potential element of inclusion. In Brazil, hip hop began to intensify in the 1980's, the São Paulo metropolitan region being its birthplace, and thereafter it expanded to other Brazilian capitals and cities. The similarities between New York and São Paulo as to the re-urbanizing process in the downtown area and the building of housing projects in the outskirts of the cities may hold clues to understanding the emergence of this aesthetic-musical movement and the São Paulo youths' strong identification with it. However, it is not within our scope of interest here to focus on the origin and development of the hip hop movement in São Paulo or elsewhere in Brazil, a topic that has been broadly studied (see among others Andrade, 1996; Silva, 1998; Tella, 2000; Felix, 2000). What this paper aims to examine is the meaning of cultural styles such as hip hop to female adolescents and youths.

If we take the female rap bands in the USA (Rose, 1994) and in Brazil (Silva, 1998) as a reference, we might state that, despite the changes achieved by the feminist movements and the social, economic and cultural transformations that triggered an increase in female participation in the public sphere (mainly in the work market), adolescent girls still add up to a minority in political-cultural movements. In a field survey that took place in the cities of Berlin and São Paulo (Weller, 2003, 2006) we find very few female bands. Among the interviewed female break or rap groups, we have seen that most of the band members are between 15 and 20 years of age. As for the male groups, in both cities we find rappers, break dancers, DJs and spray painters in different age groups (11/12 to 26). Based on these empirical data we might inquire if the small number of female groups or the short period of the groups' existence is associated with the girls' entry into the work market, with marriage or maternity, thus preventing them from continuing to exercise their artistic-musical activities. Such arguments seem plausible; however,

9 Rap (rhythm and poetry), break dance, graffiti and scratching (done by disc jockeys or DJs) are elements that make up hip hop. Some groups interviewed in Sao Paulo attribute the word rap to the meaning "rhythm, attitude and word" (in Portuguese the word for "word" begins with the letter p: *palavra*).

there is a need for new empirical studies and analyses that focus on these themes. At the same time, in accepting this justification, we would be hastening to conclusions and overlooking the analyses of other aspects concerning female participation in youth cultures. In spite of the few female rap bands and the few female spray painters and break dancers, we have found, in studies on the hip hop movement in São Paulo and Berlin (Weller, 2003), a strong female presence in terms of artistic-musical activities (during shows and other events) and/or sociopolitical activities (for example, in charity campaigns for food and clothing, campaigns against AIDS). Hence, if we understand hip hop not only as a space for rappers, dancers, spray painters and DJs, but also as the youth culture of those boys and girls who participate as fans of "A Style Nobody Can Deal With" (Rose, 1994a) we will see that the female participation in the movement is significant¹⁰. This differentiated gaze on youth cultures broadens the perspectives of analysis and comprehension of meanings that stem from within these movements. McRobbie and Garber (1975) propose at least three possibilities of studying youth cultures, with the aim to overcome the existing gaps in this field of study: 1) a critical re-reading of mainstream youth studies on account of their having overlooked the gender perspective; 2) raising awareness of the adolescent girls that belong to predominantly male cultures (skinheads, hip hop, among others); 3) dispensing greater attention to the 'alternative cultures' developed by female groups, for example, the teeny-bopper movement of adolescents and youths interested in bands or personalities of the pop universe¹¹.

Henceforth, we will proceed to briefly re-construct the experiences of black female youths of Turkish backgrounds, belonging to the hip hop movement in the cities of Berlin and São Paulo, a movement of hegemonic male features, revealing in some contexts sexist and homophobic aspects as well¹².

10 Despite the great number of fans in the age group ranging from 15 to 20, we also find youths over 20 (some even married with children) in musical events and in the movements' sociopolitical activities.

11 Some studies already point in this direction, for example, Fritzsche, 2003a; Wald, 2004.

12 According to Victoria Sau, 2004, "the word machismo (here, machism) is used primarily in the colloquial and popular scope. A more appropriate term (mainly at the ideological level) for expressing the referred concept is sexism, considering that the former is more suitable for those physical or verbal acts, whereby the sexism underlying social structure is manifested in a vulgar manner. In the psychological realm, the difference between sexism and machism is that sexism is conscious and machism unconscious; that is, the machist individual acts without necessarily being capable of explaining or accounting for the internal reasons for his/her acts, since he is solely limited to reproducing and acting upon, in an off-handed or thoughtless way, the sexism he inherits from the culture he belongs to because of nationality or social condition. In turn, homophobia or aversion towards homosexuals is the result of a set of stereotypes and prejudices as well as the intolerance towards sexual minorities. Sexist and homophobic stances are defended, above all, by groups that identify with the gansta rap style. On this subject matter see, among others: Jacob, 1993; Glovania/Heil, 1995; Rose, 1994; Quinn, 1996.

4.1 *"You can't go with them all 'cause it'll ruin your reputation...":
The Struggle for Artistic Acknowledgement and Image
Preservation of the POWER GIRLS Group*

The São Paulo group Power Girls is made up of two 17-year-olds and one 15-year-old, who have known each other for roughly six years and who decided to set up a rap band eight months ago. When inquired on their insertion in this aesthetic-political universe and on the relation with the male audience these youths had the following to say¹³:

Y: What's it like with the guys, are they prejudiced against girls' rap bands? How do you see this?

Af: Oh! (pause)

Bf: I don't know. You do the talking.

Af: Well, some are. Lots of people when there's a girl's band, like, today they said on the radio that a girl's band was comin' to town. And the radio guy went ahead and said that, you know, that it's good to have women in the hip hop movement and all, but that you can't just be rolling around the group that way 'cause people say that women wanna hip hop for, eh, like...

Cf: Yeah.

Af: 'Cause they say women join the hip hop movement, just to, like, to show off the trendies, 'cause they see everybody singing and they think it's cool, and so they start singing too, they set up their band and sing. So there's some, not all of 'em but most guys in the movement say that women are in it just to go with everyone, show off, and that just blows it. But like, we try to, like, in gigs, we kinda try to say that we're struggling for equality, men and women in the movement, and for equality in all senses. So it's growing a lot, women in the hip hop movement are growing, though some are feminists, and we don't agree with that either. But that's the deal with us, like, we never had that kind of discrimination, you know, from the guys. We're more friends with the guys than with the girls in the movement.

Bf: Yeah.

Af: We never had that kind of prejudice, nobody ever came up to tell us, I guess.

Bf: This thing about rollin' around the group, goin' with everybody, um, when it's about a friend you just come up and say, you know, you say that you can't just go with everybody 'cause people will be lookin' down on you, so they take it easy a little, that's what we do.

Af: Yeah, cause there's, not all of 'em, 'course, but there's lots of girls that are in it just for that.

Bf: And they go with lots of the dudes.

13 In transcribing the interviews, we adopted the following codes: Y is for identifying the interviewers (the codes Y1, Y2, etc. were adopted in interviews with more than one interviewer). For interviewees, we used the first few letters on the alphabet (A, B, C, etc.) followed by f for female and m for male. For more details about the Fieldwork in São Paulo and Berlin and about the methodological aspects of group discussion and the documentary method see Weller, 2005, 2006 and also the article of Ralf Bohnsack in this volume.

Af: So the thing is, for example, we got girlfriends that also joined the movement and went with everybody. So like, they went with all the dudes and that done it for all the girls. That's why the dudes talk like that. But that's the only kind of prejudice that's in it for us women, 'cause like, we all get talked, you know. But there's lots of people giving us support too...

According to the interviewees the boys have an established opinion concerning the girls' interest for the hip hop movement, which represents a barrier for any girl who would be interested in participating in this juvenile culture. In other words, it must be shown to 'the dudes' that the aim is not to find a space in the movement for the purpose of flirtation or of showing off the latest trends. Such a judgment is found not only among male groups within a same district, but also in the media itself. The very means of communication – in this case, radio show hosts – take on the role of reinforcing the latent sexism not only in the universe of hip hop culture, as they broadcast new female groups. In the statement "it's good to have women in the hip hop movement but you can't be rolling around the group" the idea that only women circulate and "go with everyone" is implicit. In the male and sexist imagery this circulation takes place in only one way, that is, it is women who "roll" from one partner to the next, while men remain static and, in this position, immune to any sort of disesteem. Actually though, this notion is also shared by the female interviewees. These youths have already internalized values and expectations attributed to the female in their society, in which thorough preservation of the image and reputation is assumed. In this sense, the women themselves, in the hip hop movement contribute to the preservation of these values imposed by the sexist society by undertaking the commitment of controlling and advertizing other female companions: "when it's about a friend you just come up and say, you know, you say that you can't just go with everybody 'cause people will be lookin' down on you." In the interviewees' viewpoint, this undertaking is necessary because what is at stake is not only the image and reputation of a girl directly involved in a situation, but rather of all of those who participate in the movement. Discrimination becomes collective because the 'talk' regarding the consequences of one specific fact will affect all of the women, collectively.

In such a context marked by the image that women circulate within the movement and among the members of the opposite sex, the Power Girls group has strived to elaborate a way to contest these positions and to assert equal status between men and women in the movement as well as equality in every way. It is observed that the group has opted for the stance of rejecting feminism and feminist struggles. Such a stance has led to their being accepted by the boys while disliked by other women in the movement who identify themselves as feminists. The group seems to be in search of a third way of building equality, which is made overt during the interview as follows: "No to sexism, no to feminism, yes to socialism." It is interesting to

observe that these girls establish a binary opposition between feminism and sexism, which leads to a rejection of both positions. Although what the interviewees mean by "socialism" is not clear, this third approach appears as a utopian and decontextualized theoretical elaboration. However, in the quotidian practice, these youths are fully aware that equality between men and women is far from being achieved, that their companions in the hip hop movement are scarcely willing to engage in sharing chores and responsibilities so as to enable women to pursue their artistic careers after marriage or after they have had children:

Cf: Like, when I get married, like, if I continue singing rap, like, I don't wanna have a baby right away, cause like, after ya have a baby, like, if ya continue rapping, ya won't be able to rap every time ya go out. Your husband, he'll go out, he'll leave the baby for us to look after, they don't really care. That's why I said ya gotta be responsible when ya get married. I just don't wanna have kids that easy.

Af: Yeah, you bet.

Bf: I'm taking Tauana¹⁴ to be dancing and doing some...

Cf: Are ya' taking her right away, so little, so little?

Bf: They can already come along when their two.

Cf: Well hon', I'll tell ya' this much. It'll be two years before ya' start singing again.

Af: Yeah, it'll be two years. Or make it three.

Bf: My mom can sit for me.

Af: Right.

Cf: Ya' think ya' can say my mom'll sit, just like that. My mom said she'd look after my child when I get married. That's why I'm getting her to move in with me.

The support of the maternal grandmother, who would assume the grandchild's co-education and the task of child-raising, is seen as the only possible means of conciliating family and artistic career. Nevertheless, even being able to rely on this help ("My mom said she'd look after my child when I get married"), the interviewees seem to be aware that they will be hindered from their singing and from participating in the activities within the movement during a certain period of time.

4.2 "Just overnight they change into somebody else, react totally different...": Disappointment Experienced by Group LIFE GIRLS with Change in Behavior and Loss of Friendship

Life Girls is a Berlin break dance group made up of three youths who have known each other since their childhood¹⁵. They usually meet in a juvenile

14 Name chosen by interviewee for her future daughter.

15 This group discussion was conducted by the Author together with Aglaja Przyborski. Af is 20 years old; Bf is 15; and Cf is 16. The group started at the time when educators at the youth center offered a dance course to girls of Turkish background. Later, Af was also in-

center which they have frequented for many years and which has become, not only to these youths but also to many youths in that district, a 'second home,' so to speak. The meaning of this space, which also has a specific room available for the girls, was clearly stressed during the interview and can be observed during the visits. The juvenile center offers a number of activities, although the dance rooms represent the favorite and most frequented space. The center also has a multi-purpose room, where the group had a presentation which was fundamental to their consolidation:

Bf: Our second [public presentation] was here.

Af: At the RZ [youth center] like, our buddies, like, against us.

Cf: Everybody laughed.

Af: Everybody laughed but everybody enjoyed it, they said the dudes would make fun of us, that they'd laugh at us and, like, you know, and, yeah, yeah.

Cf: But we didn't show them.

Af: We always rehearsed alone and, yeah, I'd always tell the girls that, come on ya' all, they think it's cool but they don't ever say nothing. Maybe, ya know, the dudes at the same age as them, I'm 20 and they're 15 and 16 and, yeah, to them, the dudes never say it to their face, oh you did well, this and that, and that they think it's cool that the girls...

Bf: The guys have ...

Af: Yeah, and that's why they, maybe they have this image, maybe not, but the boys just can't seem to say it to the girls. But to me, they say they think it's cool that the girls are now dancing and so...

Much like the São Paulo group, the ushering in of the Berlin youths of Turkish background in hip hop, mainly through break dancing, was applauded by male peers although this support was not revealed overtly to all the participants. At the beginning the boys did not know that the girls were rehearsing, because the girls feared the initiative of entering an environment which had so far been solely male would be hindered by the boys. They also feared that the public presentation would be scornfully booed and that they would be exposed to ridicule. The experience and confidence that Ayse (Af) conveyed to other female peers was crucial for them to accept the challenge of setting up a female break group. But it is the boys themselves who end up realizing the very asset it would represent for them if more female youths would get involved and start to rehearse the difficult artistic elements of break dance. The female participation would facilitate the ushering in of new and original aspects in performances aimed at break tournaments – to take place either at local or national and international levels – and enhance their chances in relation to other groups:

vited to teach break dancing to other girls who frequented the youth center.

Af: ...I'd dance with three dudes and they're really very good, they're some of the best around here and, yeah, they're actually the best Am Bm and Cm and yeah.

Cf: And they really insisted that a girl dance and she was the only one, so she said ok.

Af: Yeah, so I practiced with them and they would only say, um, we're gonna have to do something about it, they didn't have a whole lot of patience. In the last three, two days, they started practicing a little and, like, and I was always, like, um, um, um, um, I'd say, like, I'm gonna screw up, I just know it, cause we never practiced the steps as partners all the way, we never got it synchronized and, um, on stage, I got it wrong (laughter).

Cf: But even so they got first place.

Af: Yeah, even so, we were the Berlin champions (laughter). I even had to fight (battlen) against my coach.

Y2: Is that so?

Af: Yeah, and he was in front of me and I go to the middle [of the stage] and, sort of like, they do something and I have to come in and also do something, like battlen and stuff like that, um, I do some steps and he starts to laugh and say good, good (laughter).

Y2: (laughter)

Af: He don't see me as his competition or stuff like that, nor could I be cause he's already strong and, um, he says good, good, that's it Af (laughter).

Bf: It was fun.

Af: Yeah. I even had to do some belly dancing and stuff. They brought in belly dancing...

Ayse's participation was fundamental for the group to win the Berlin break dancing tournament, given that the gig's originality is just as important a criterion as the accuracy of the corporeal performance. However, it is noteworthy that the interest in female participation in the movement is restricted to a background role within the group. Whereas the boys present their acrobatic movements, the girls make their bodies available in order to benefit the image of the group, be it as the group's hostess (Front-Girl), as background stage decoration (Background-Girl), or yet to give the gig an overall air of exoticism, for example, by adding belly-dancing elements. Thus, hip hop cannot be much different from other styles and music groups that often resort to women as dancers or background voices (see Glowania/Heil, 1995).

Although Ayse has had the opportunity to demonstrate not only her skills as an oriental dancer but also as a break dancer, at no point did her participation in the group represent a threat to her male peers. While she describes the "battle" against her coach as a true challenge, he does nothing but praise her efforts, viewing the situation not as a real fight, but rather as an amusing enactment. Furthermore, the scant interest that the boys had in rehearsing unveiled that this performance, prepared for the break dance tournament, did not aim to include women or to create equality: the aim was to overwhelm opponents and increase the chances of winning the title.

After years of struggle for space and acknowledgment of female groups in the hip hop movement, the boys' change in attitude towards the young women, once they had grown out of puberty, has been a major shock to the members of Life Girls:

Af: ... because at a given time they make believe they are your, you know, your protector and then they go, um, you can't do this, you can't do that, you can't do whatever. And when a girl takes that, you know, um, when, for instance, somebody tells me, don't wear miniskirts ok, and when, um, when somebody says, um, cause my brother knows I wear miniskirts, my mother knows, my dad knows and I don't care about the rest of world. And when some guy, any ol' Joe comes up to you and says, look, you can't wear stuff like that, not with me around, not with me in this neighborhood, or something like, um, that's not cool, put on something longer. So I might say, who do you think you are man, get out of my face you monkey. That's exactly what I'd say because, hey, do they actually think they are responsible for this and, ya know what, I grew up in this neighborhood and I, um, I've gone through this lots of times. They were still little kids, and we weren't that small, we were fifteen, sixteen, still kids, no make-up yet, no hair-do, just a pony tail sports pants and training jacket, so we'd go outside and not care a bit about them. But now that I've grown a bit older, that I've grown prettier, that I've become more feminine and that my body has taken a pretty shape, so to speak, and I wear something that is more revealing, or I put make-up on my eyes or on my face, or, um, I do my hair and we draw attention, that really bugs them a lot, you can just tell. So, they, um, forgot, which is the worst thing because just overnight they change into somebody else, react totally different and that can spoil lots of things, um, a friendship... that's the way it is, it's something you just can't change.

Bf: Yeah,

Af: They won't accept that you're

Bf: Growing up into an adult.

Af: Growing up into an adult and that you have eyes for other men. And, um, you know men, they know how other men work and maybe that's why they don't wanna accept that, that things might just be. Like, take a look at that girl looking at you or, like, something like goes through.

Bf: Yeah, or when you're dancing, some people say, look, you guys are girls, so why are you dancing like that and yack yack yack, some think it's cool, wow, you dance and like, others will say, you guys are girls, it doesn't suit you, you better give up or stuff, that's what they say.

Af: Yeah, but it's not because they don't like it, but it's because somehow they generalize it in their heads and that's why they say girls shouldn't be dancing, they shouldn't be doing this or that. Girls

Bf: Should stay home.

Af: Shouldn't be having gigs that often, shouldn't be exposed (pause). That's absurd (pause). Now that I'm putting it into words, it all comes out in the open.

Bf: Now that's when it all becomes clear now.

Af: Yeah, now it all becomes real clear to me what is actually happening here. It was already clear before, but now that I stop to actually think about it, and, um, that I see the images a little, it really is absurd.

Bf: Yeah, I've been thinking a lot about this, it's always on my mind.

Af: But all of this, everything we've been saying is really true. It's not made up, it's not small town or stuff, it's the way things really are, the way they are in Berlin-XX¹⁶. It's like that here.

Bf: That's just what it's like in Berlin-XX.

16 A Berlin district with high concentration of inhabitants of Turkish background.

At a younger age, at a time when there was not much difference in the dress or in the style of dancing, there was a closer bond and greater reciprocity between the members of the both sexes. However, with the onset of puberty and, specifically, with the enhancement of feminine features through attire and/or make-up, the girls would now be seen as a threat to male 'honor' and to the norms which some strive to establish for the neighborhood or district in which they live: "not with me around, not with me in this neighborhood." To Ayse, who grew up in an Alevist family¹⁷, controlling and restricting women's freedom is seen as a negation of living together harmoniously which had until then been possible ("they forgot"), as an inversion of unexplainable conduct: "Just overnight they change into somebody else, react totally different." The change in the boys' behavior is expressed, on the one hand, as a form of jealousy, which cannot bear the fact that the young women of Turkish origin will "have eyes for other men" and, on the other hand, as a consequence of the habitus which they incorporate. Aware of how "other men work," that is, how their own peers would not react otherwise and, at the same time, buttressed by the logic of being in keeping with male 'honor' (see Bohnsack/Loos/Przyborsky, 2001), the young men wish to prevent the relationships of the young Turkish women in their neighborhood with other men – whether or not they belong to the same ethnic group – with the purpose of preserving them 'intact' for marriage. Such control and restriction is interpreted as absurd to these women, given that they do not live in a small community or in remote times: "...Now that I'm putting it into words, it all comes out in the open... now it all becomes real clear to me what is actually happening here... it really is absurd... It's not made up, it's not small town... this is ... in Berlin-XX."

5 Final Considerations

Our analysis concerning the experience of these Berlin girls of Turkish background and of the São Paulo Negro girls did not so much focus on identifying contrasts and resemblances among the different contexts and social realities as it did on analyzing these youths' reflections concerning their experience with the opposite sex and also the difficulties they face in their struggle for acknowledgement as women in a juvenile cultural environment

17 Alevism is a religious branch within Islam which emerged in opposition to Sunni-Orthodox Islam. During the Osman Empire, the Alevis suffered harsh persecution and discrimination. During a long time the Alevis were obliged to conceal their identity. In Germany one third of the population of Turkish background is made up of Alevis from the region of Anatolia (there are approximately 40,000 Alevis living in Berlin). To the Alevis, women have the same rights as men and can even assume religious roles (cf. Yonan, 1993: 69-72).

strongly represented by the male and by the preservation of what has been built as male within this universe¹⁸.

In the São Paulo context, there is an anticipation of the prejudices and of the moralization in relation to female behavior, so that the female youths will opt for a strategy that eschews proximity or that forgoes intimacy with peers. Such strategy seems to be in contradiction with the group's stance in the struggle for equality between the sexes in the movement. However, their quotidian experiences as well as the projections for the future (marriage, child-raising), jeopardize any consensus between the discourse and the practice of equality. In turn, with the Berlin youths of Turkish background, it is not the girls who drift away from the boys, rather it is the contrary: with the onset of puberty the collective trajectory is broken violently, and any former harmony is negated for the purpose of keeping with a form of male 'honor' contingent on values brought by immigrants from past generations. Although forgoing relationships poses a problem mainly for the girls, who will now be seen as "watched" or "controlled" by peers of the opposite sex, the consequences of these major restrictions can be observed among the boys, given that they will no longer be able to express warmth and affectivity towards the girls within the same ethnic group¹⁹.

Analyzing certain aspects in the quotidian of the black girls in the São Paulo periphery and of the Berlin girls of Turkish background, we pose the following questions: What is the impact of these experiences in the identity constitution of these youths? In what way has hip hop, or other juvenile manifestations, enabled the traditional mainstream roles to be not only contested but also to be transformed? What spaces have female groups been occupying in the sphere of juvenile cultures? What dialogs have these groups and feminist organizations been establishing?

Posing such questions unveil the need for further studies and reflections on the theme, which has still not received enough attention from researchers despite the achievements of new spaces and the increasing visibility of feminist groups. However, further studies will demand a theoretical basis and the mastery of methodologies that reach beyond a descriptive feature and facilitate the understanding of the identities and the gender relations that are emerging in the sphere of juvenile cultures.

18 These representations entail a number of elements such as a brash and aggressive voice, corporeal mimicry, attire, the habit of uttering swear words at gigs, among others.

19 This situation leads these young women of Turkish background to establish intimate relations with youths from other ethnic groups.

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