

# *Research on The Identity Construction of Chinese Hip-Hop Fans*

Zhuoxi Yang<sup>1,a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Institute of International Relations and Public Affairs, Shanghai International Studies University, North Renmin Road, Songjiang District, Shanghai, China*  
a. 0191132039@shisu.edu.cn

**Abstract:** Hip-Hop culture was born in black neighborhoods in the United States, Since its introduction to China, it has been excluded from the mainstream cultural system and remained "underground" for a long time. However, with the broadcast of "The Rap of China", a show featuring hip-hop music, hip-hop culture has attracted widespread attention in China, and the number of Chinese hip-hop fans has exploded. This paper takes Chinese hip-hop culture and Chinese hip-hop fans as the research objects, attempts to explore how hip-hop fans achieve identity construction from their perspective. This research mainly adopts quantitative research and qualitative research through questionnaires and in-depth interviews with hip-hop fans, and finds that the identity construction of hip-hop fans has two aspects: self-identity construction through hip-hop fans' pursuit of an "ideal self", resonance with hip-hop music and consumption behavior, and social identity construction through their interaction with "in-groups" and "out-groups". Although there are some limitations in the methods and conclusions, this paper will still be beneficial to further explore the chinese hip-hop fans research from the perspective of identity construction.

**Keywords:** Chinese Hip-Hop Culture, Fandom, Identity Construction.

## 1. Introduction

The rapid development of Internet technology has gradually changed contemporary people's psychological needs and behavior, creating a new digital living space and media ecosystem. Technological change has provided new opportunities and challenges for non-mainstream culture, which had long been "underground". Chinese hip-hop music has been brought from the "underground" into the public eye through the mass media and has even created a national debate on hip-hop music.

Hip-hop culture has been controversial since its advent. Hip-hop music, originating in the American black community, has been considered an artistic vehicle for "resistance, protest, empowerment and social critique" [1]and became a symbol of youthful energy as society evolved. Chinese hip-hop is similar to American hip-hop in that its primary function is to inspire listeners by reflecting on social reality, criticizing social evils, and recalling life experiences. 2017 was a critical turning point for Chinese hip-hop culture, as hip-hop music took off in a frenzy among China's youth groups with the broadcast of IQIYI' s music-based online variety show, "The Rap of China" (zhong guo you xi ha) show's total viewership reached 2.68 billion, opening a communication

channel between hip-hop music and the general public [2]. "Flow", "Freestyle", "Beat", "Diss", "Battle" and other keywords of hip-hop culture became well known to the public. Hip-hop music groups gained more attention in major cities across China, such as Chengdu's "CDC", Shanghai's "Walking Dead" and Xi'an's "HHH". As a new form of culture, hip-hop music, packaged and spread by the new media, has seen an increasing number of young audiences attracted to this "imported product", creating a large fans group and even bringing about the development of an industry.

The year 2017 has been described by the media as the "First Year of Hip-Hop" in China, and "The Rap of China" has brought hip-hop culture to the masses in a real sense. Nevertheless, the emergence of some content that deviates from mainstream values has set back the development of hip-hop music in China, and various music platforms have imposed strict restrictions on hip-hop music. Fans of hip-hop music are predominantly young people who seek identity through this modern culture and form new social groups, which reflect the way of thinking and behavior of hip-hop fan groups.

Fandom and stardom began to enter the realm of communication studies in Europe and the United States in the middle of the last century. The love/hate complex of fans towards celebrities is considered one of the most complex parts of audience studies. In 1992, the American scholar Henry Jenkins mentioned in his book *Textual Poachers* that a fan is a person who is avidly involved in ball games, business, or entertainment, who is obsessed with, admires, or worships a film, television, or sports star [3]. Sandvoss synthesizes previous research on fandom and notes that fandom is a fixed, regular emotional input into a famous story and text [4]. In *Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization*, Joli Jenson rejects the academic view of the 'obsessive' as an 'over-indulged person' and the mass media view of the 'obsessive' as a 'dangerous person'. He defined the 'obsessive' as an ordinary person immersed in everyday life and revealing the deep contradictions of the negativity produced by modern life [5]. Lawrence Grossberg's definition of "fandom" from the perspective of "acute sensation" suggests that in fandom, the emotions and feelings of the fandom begin to be organized and that it becomes meaningful to focus on people or things that are distinctive [6].

Identity is a ubiquitous and heterogeneous concept, a central issue to be clarified first and foremost in a person's social or collective existence. Identity involves the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of others that we would be concerned about [7]. Anthony Giddens argues that this is a modern problem and proposes a theory of self-identity, which argues that the self that individuals come to know through a discursive understanding of their own experiences [8], with the core: self. In the 1960s, in the wake of the globalization of new media, the study of identity began to broaden from the dimension of individual identity to that of social groups. Henri Tajfel argues that an individual's perception of belonging to a social group while being subordinate to a group has emotional and value significance for the individual [9]. Social identity reduces the individualistic information in the self-concept and emphasizes the social attributes of the person.

In order to better understand interviewees' underlying motivations, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about an issue, an in-depth interview is applied in this research. In the selection of interviewees, five categories of interviewees were chosen based on the respective roles played by fans, the length of time they have been fans, and the critical point in time of 2017: including old fans before the broadcast of "The Rap of China", new fans after the broadcast of the show, fans active in the Internet, fans active in offline performances and fans who are active in songwriting. One or two fans were randomly selected from each category and eight interviewees were selected. The interview questions were designed around hip-hop music fans' exposure to hip-hop music, their perceptions of the hip-hop fan groups, their roles in the hip-hop music fan groups, their attitudes towards hip-hop music, and the basic information about the interviewees.

As the issue of hip-hop fans' identity is somewhat abstract, this paper will use the questionnaire method as a supplement to objectively and concretely present hip-hop fans' exposure to hip-hop music, hip-hop culture, the interaction between fans, and quantitatively analyze the fans' identification with hip-hop culture. As this study takes hip-hop music fans as the research object, the scope of questionnaire distribution is relatively limited. The questionnaire was mainly distributed within various hip-hop WeChat fan groups. Most hip-hop fans communicate through online social media platforms, especially WeChat, and offline gigs need to be ordered through online platforms. The questionnaire included five areas, basic information; questions related to hip-hop music; questions related to the hip-hop fan group; questions related to hip-hop practice; and questions related to hip-hop attitudes.

This study aims to explore the identity construction process of Chinese hip-hop music fans and gain insight into the causal relationship between identity in the process of change in the hope of helping the general public better understand the cultural needs of contemporary youth groups and the dissemination path of hip-hop culture among youth groups. This study will also help the public gain a more objective perspective on the development of hip-hop music in China through the lens of the identity construction of fans.

## **2. The Spread of Chinese Hip-Hop Music and the Rise of Hip-Hop Fans**

The impact of hip-hop culture has spread from New York and Los Angeles in the United States to the rest of the world, and industries such as sports and fashion have been deeply affected. Many of China's urban youth are also getting into hip-hop music. In 1985, Chinese musician Cui Jian included a song called It is not that I do not understand (bu shi wo bu ming bai) on his album, the first hip-hop song in China. This study will focus on the cultural ecology of Chinese hip-hop music after 2017.

Today's Chinese hip-hop music has a distinctly regional character: Chengdu rap represented by CDC, Chongqing rap represented by GOSH, and Beijing rap represented by Longjing. In terms of music style mainly consists of old school rap, which expresses relatively heavy and concrete feelings, and new school rap and trap music, which expresses young people's daily attitudes, sensitivities, struggles, and contradictions. A large fan base has been formed as a result of this spread.

### **2.1. The Spread of Chinese Hip-Hop music: from "Underground" to "Ground"**

Most of the interviewees got into hip-hop after the show aired in this interview. In 2017, the broadcast of IQIYI's "The Rap of China" ignited the summer vacation of the youth with extreme heat, and the niche culture of hip-hop spread rapidly among the youth. That is why 2017 is also known as the "Year of Hip-Hop", an essential year for hip-hop music to go mainstream. The show captures the youth group, using the celebrity effect and repeatedly emphasizing hip-hop phrases to concretize and symbolize the program, winning a perfect communication effect. High-frequency phrases like "Do you have a freestyle?" and "I do not think so" have been widely spread on the Internet and have become popular phrases, and the general audience has started to learn about the "The Rap of China" and hip-hop music.

The formerly online community and independent label rappers have emerged to bring "underground" hip-hop to the "ground". Hip-hop artists frequently appear in various popular music shows and commercials, and their performance venues are being expanded. However, with the negative news about "The Rap of China" champions, the adverse elements of hip-hop culture such as "foul language", "sex" and "materialism" were once again magnified and once again criticized by netizens. The related music works were also taken down from the whole network. However,

Chinese youth groups have been awakened to the perceptions and feelings of hip-hop culture, which is rapidly moving from a niche form of culture to mainstream culture.

In order to better survive and develop in the Chinese cultural environment, hip-hop music has carried out corresponding self-reform, such as the transformation of the content of song works, the change of singers' behavior, and the convergence to mainstream culture. It is a process of continuous integration and development with mainstream culture and dominant ideology in facing the public. However, commercialization has caused hip-hop culture to lose much of its original meaning and become one of many pop cultures. IQIYI has renamed "The Rap of China" to "China New Rap" since 2018 and has gradually shifted the focus of the show to the popularity of hip-hop music. When choosing mentors, flow artists are preferred in an attempt to create "rap stars" who can collide with pop culture. The show has been questioned by groups within the circle, with underground hip-hop groups creating more than 100 rap pieces slamming the program team for promoting what is not pure Chinese hip-hop music.

## **2.2. The Formation of Hip-Hop Music Fans**

The mass communication process is divided into the "information flow" of the information transmission process and the "influence flow" of the effect spillover process[10]. According to Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, mass media is more effective in the early process of propagating new information. At the same time, interpersonal communication is more powerful in changing people's attitudinal behavior. In 2017, "The Rap of China" received widespread attention thanks to the immense popularity of its mentor Kris Wu and the novelty of its subject matter. However, initially, people did not know much about hip-hop music and did not even expect the show. Many people thought that there was no hip-hop in China and that mentor Kris Wu did not represent hip-hop, and most viewers just went to watch the show with the mindset of making a spectacle of it.

Some viewers who watch shows and are attracted to hip-hop music begin to recommend it to people around them online and in their lives, and interpersonal communication begins to play an active role in the spread. When colleagues at school or work are always talking about a particular show, band, or performer, people who are unfamiliar with hip-hop tend to be attracted to this fan base as a way to join a social group.

After watching "The Rap of China", viewers changed their views on the show, improved their understanding of hip-hop, and became interested in the culture. They found common interest groups on the Internet by searching for rappers or rap information they followed and told their friends online or in reality to promote the show and influence a more comprehensive group; thus, a hip-hop craze took off in China.

## **3. Identity Construction of Chinese Hip-Hop Music Fans**

### **3.1. Self Identity Construction**

Lacan's mirror theory states that individual identity is constructed through self-perception and feedback from the other[11]. According to this theory, this paper believes that self-identity is mainly realized through "individual reflection activities" and "a reference to others", and the core of "individual reflection activities" is to build the "ideal self", the person one wants to be.

This chapter is divided into three parts: the first part analyzes how fans realize their "ideal self" in real life through hip-hop activities and thus construct their self-identity; the second part analyzes how fans realize their self-identity through resonance with hip-hop music; the third part, the author analyzes how fans reflect their uniqueness as fans through consumption, distinguish themselves from others, and construct their self-identity.

### 3.1.1. The Individual's Pursuit for the "Ideal Self"

Goffman compares social life to a large "stage", where individuals or different groups are the "performers" on the stage, and the "viewers" are the people around them who exist and enter the situation or can be the people who exist in the performers' imagination [12]. As performers on stage, they have to hide their true selves to please the viewers. In an environment where only the performers themselves can enter and the rest of the viewers cannot, the performers can relax and show more of their spontaneous, authentic aspects. The virtual world constructed by the Internet provides a platform for young people to present their true and ideal selves.

#### 3.1.1.1. The Spirit of Hip-Hop Matches the "Ideal Self"

It is common for a person to have an illusory perception of themselves, and when they are not satisfied in real life, they turn to other spaces to seek satisfaction and produce an ideal self.

Shenny, a hip-hop fan, said in the interview: "I do not like to talk, and people around me would think that I am a rather lovely person, and the things I like are probably more aesthetic things like taking pictures. My friends were amazed when they learned that I like hip-hop music, saying that I do not look like it, but I think a part of me is freer and likes this cooler culture. Maybe everyone has two sides, I have an unrestrained soul that is probably closer to this hip-hop culture, and this is also the real me. In general, I think the ideal me has multiple personalities." Shenny uses hip-hop to pursue her ideal cool, free-spirited self, and in the process, she gains the satisfaction of his self-intention.

"Hip-hop is an attitude" is a famous line among hip-hop fans. Young people form their views of the world during adolescence, complaining about life and fantasizing about the future; they like to be direct and resist concealment. Hip-hop provides them with a medium where many young people find a new self-identity.

On the Figure 1, with the results of Questionnaire: "Which hip-hop spirits do you identify with?", most fans agree with the hip-hop spirits of "peace&love" and "keep it real", which act as a bond between fans and hip-hop, not in a material or auditory or visual sense, but in terms of values.

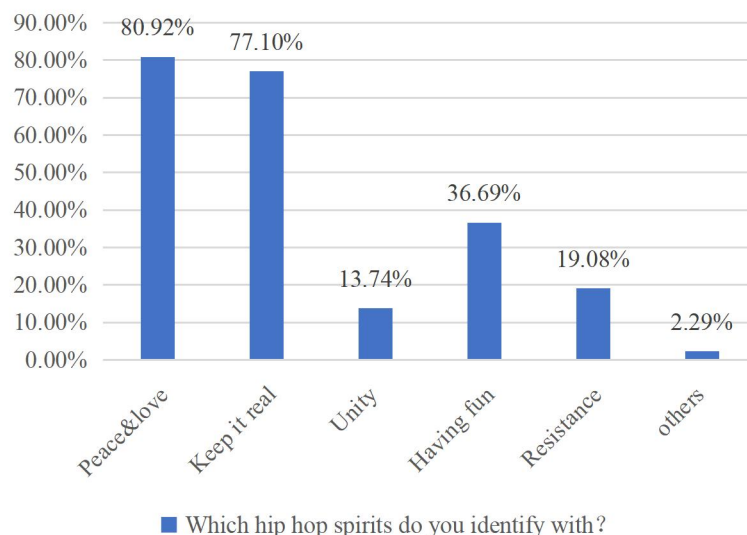


Figure 1: Questionnaire: " Which hip-hop spirits do you identify with?"

### 3.1.1.2. Hip-Hop Artists Perform as the "Ideal Self"

Hip-hop culture emphasizes "keep it real", being true to yourself, and expressing yourself authentically. In "The Rap of China", hip-hop artists were asked, "Why are you on this show?" Such questions were met with surprising answers: "To raise the performance fee" and "I came to win the championship". The authenticity and straightforwardness of hip-hop artists align with the youth's desire for individuality.

BinWang, one of the interviewers, said that this "real" of hip-hop artists influenced him: "It is pretty cool to see all these hip-hop artists being so straight; I used not to be a particularly willing person to express my will and say what I wanted. But after I got into hip-hop, I told myself that I should be honest and express what I wanted, and why should I care what other people think? I think this attitude is what hip-hop music brings to me." BinWang's self-reflection through hip-hop culture is at the core of his approach to reconstructing an ideal self. This image of hip-hop culture seeking to be true to oneself fits in with the "ideal self" of hip-hop fans, thus allowing them to construct self-identity, and in the process, their identity construction with hip-hop culture gradually deepens.

The airing of "The Rap of China" has brought a group of underground rappers to the ground, realizing their aspirations and turning their lives around. Some younger age groups are beginning to aspire to this path to fame. College students, the mainstay of the youth group, are also heavily influenced by hip-hop culture. Hip-hop clubs have been popping up in colleges since "The Rap of China", and many have jumped at the chance to achieve success in life through rap competitions and shows.

Astro from Kunming University of Science and Technology is one of them. He said in the interview: "Hip-hop is more lyrically oriented, easier to write than other popular music, and hip-hop music enables me to express my attitude directly. I have now released three of my hip-hop songs on NetEase, and I am aware that the path of rapping will be difficult, but I feel that creating music is not in conflict with my current state of life, and even if I do not end up being famous, I will continue to persevere. Hip-hop music has become a way for me to express myself." This example of going from obscurity to fame resonated with Astro, who regarded his favorite rapper as his goal to strive for and inspire himself to become better. In the process, fans complete the construction of their self-identity.

### 3.1.1.3. Build "Ideal Self" through Social Platforms

Hip-hop fans perform their different roles in life. However, in cyberspace, they tend to present themselves as fans, performing in the foreground by actively posting hip-hop-related information and using social media as a window and medium for presenting themselves and constructing their "ideal selves".

WeChat and Weibo are both common social media platforms used by young people, where they carefully manage their roles. Sharing hip-hop music on WeChat is the most common behavior among hip-hop fans, who share their favorite music and show their unique style and cultural pride. In addition, they also demonstrate their identity as hip-hop fans by posting texts, pictures, and other information that others may not understand due to the uniqueness of the culture. However, the ego enjoys this uniqueness and uses it to separate itself from others who do not understand hip-hop and realize the ideal and unique self.

"I see people sharing hip-hop music on WeChat every day, and when I hear a good hip-hop song, I cannot help but share it. Although I listen to all types of music, there is nothing to share when everyone is listening to popular music, and it is the niche hip-hop music that has the value of sharing." Hip-hop fan January is a passionate fan who shares hip-hop music. She distinguishes her identity as a hip-hop listener from other pop listeners through this sharing. By enjoying hip-hop



culture, she generates pride, constructs her niche and unique fan identity, achieving self-identity construction.

### 3.1.2. Hip-Hop Music Resonates with Fans

Apart from projecting their emotions onto their favorite rappers, hip-hop fans listen to hip-hop music as another way to satisfy their emotional needs. Hip-hop fans unconsciously bring their emotions to their favorite music, freely experiencing the feelings they imagine, visualizing their inner world, and satisfying their inner emotional needs through the music that resonates with them. On the Figure 2, In response to the questionnaire "How does hip-hop music make you feel?", the top three responses are: "It touches my heart", "It relieves my daily anxiety" and "It gives me hope in life".

In the interview, Charlie said, "Kanye West has taught me the importance of loving myself and never doubting my true self because of what others think, at any time, in any situation. Also, there is genius in this world that normal people can never understand. I love hip-hop music because it brings me so much, especially when I need spiritual solace. Sometimes I feel like what is singing about in the songs is me." Fans connect themselves to hip-hop through their favorite songs or artists, enjoying the feeling of their ideal, releasing their inner emotions, and enhancing their self-identity.

When asked, "What do you think is the difference between hip-hop music and other music genres," Mr. Wu said: "Hip-hop music is more inclusive because of sampling techniques, rap lyrics, and other reasons, and hip-hop music can be combined with all kinds of music to form more distinctive music. That is why hip-hop has been on the rise over the years. " Hip-hop is different from traditional Chinese mainstream music in composition, lyrics, and performance style. Having been confronted with a similar style of music for a long time makes it easy for Chinese youth to be attracted to a new, unfamiliar feeling when hearing hip-hop music.

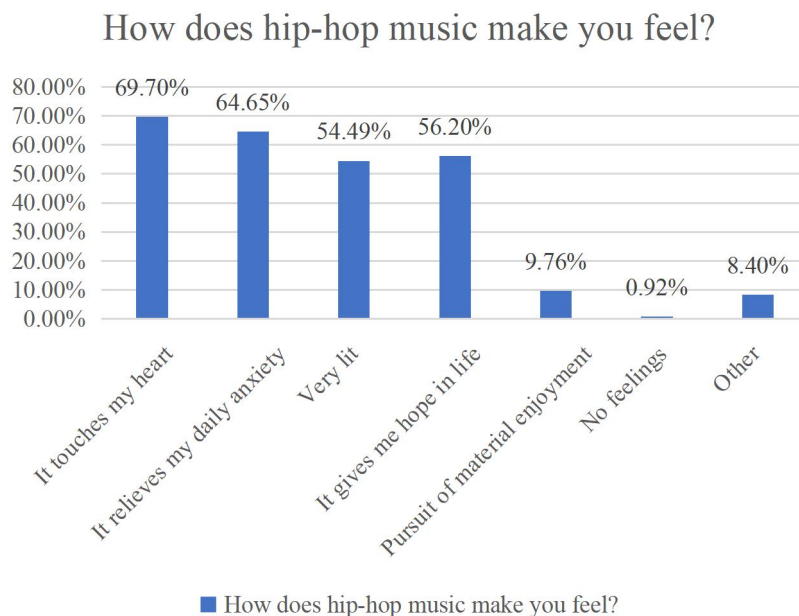


Figure 2: Questionnaire: "How does hip-hop music make you feel?"

### 3.1.3. Hip-Hop Cultural Consumption Builds Self Identity

According to Featherstone, on a social level, people embody and maintain social disparities through consumer goods and thus acquire a certain social status[13]. Pleasure, desires, and dreams are sought after when hip-hop fans consume in various consumer places. Hip-hop culture is also accompanied by consumption in postmodern culture, especially in apparel and accessories. The costume has become a way of establishing an individual's self-identity and can indicate that the individual belongs to a particular fan group. "What we wear depends on who we are and, most importantly, what we listen to." [14] Hip-hop culture has had a considerable impact on the fashion industry. From Adidas striking a \$1 million deal with Run-DMC after the group performed the song "My Adidas," which is considered rap's first endorsement deal, to Kanye West's collaboration with Adidas.

"Hip-hop has had a big influence on my dress style, and I am really into oversize clothes, necklaces and sneakers, and things that look hip-hop. You can guess if someone likes hip-hop or not just by the style of dressing. Before I became a hip-hop fan, I never thought I would have dreadlocks, but I saw many rappers with dreadlocks, and after looking at them for a long time, I thought they looked pretty good." --Astro said in the interview. The purchase of hip-hop-related clothing is a way for fans to satisfy their desires and bring satisfaction; it is also a status symbol, a straightforward way to show their identity to others. In the process, consumption helps fans construct their self-identity.

## 3.2. Social Identity Construction

Social identity is a conceptual term cited by social psychologist Henri Tajfel in 1972 and formally recognized in 1978. Tajfel defines social identity as part of an individual's self-image. Unlike the emphasis on individual-individual relationships in the self-identity process, social identity is more oriented towards individual-group relationships[15]. In order to increase their self-image to enhance the status of the group to which they belong, fans divided the world into "them" and "us" based on a process of social categorization, creating "in-group" and "out-group". Social identity is the identification of an individual's concept of self and the reaffirmation of identity in social contexts and group relations. The social identity construction is accomplished in the interaction process in both "in-group" and "out-group", causing a direct effect on the individual's social cognition and social practice behavior.

### 3.2.1. Interaction of In-groups

#### 3.2.1.1. Interaction in Online Communities

The rapid development of the Internet has made information more accessible and more independently selective. The trend towards diversification and segmentation of audiences has become increasingly pronounced, and society has become "stratified". Under the trend of "stratification", individuals with common perceptions and needs gather into groups and reach a certain consensus. They rely on the Internet to reach deep into their area of passion and actively spread it outwards to gain a sense of belonging and identity on a larger scale.

Hip-hop fans join virtual communities based on their interests to create a place to exchange hip-hop advice and interact. On the Figure 3, In this questionnaire 77.86% of hip-hop fans joined less than ten hip-hop-type fan groups, while 17.55% joined more than ten fan groups.



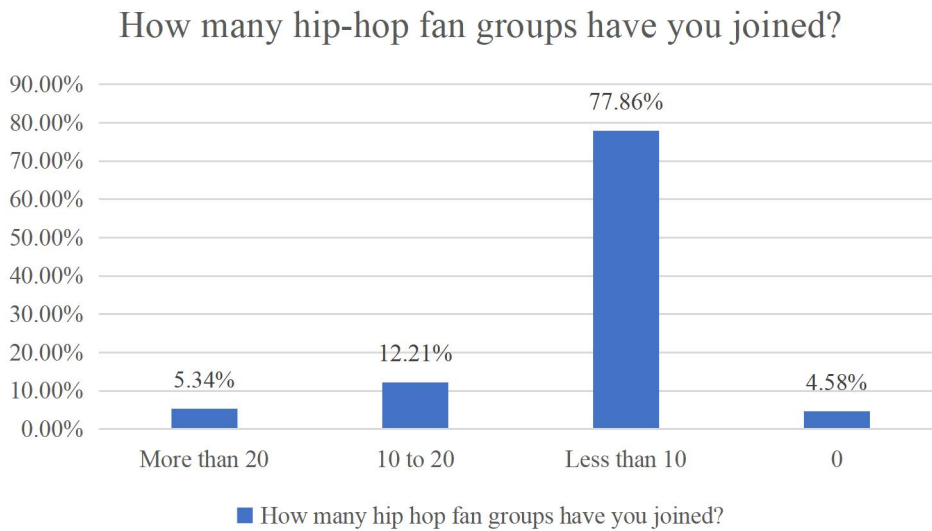


Figure 3: Questionnaire: "How many hip-hop fan groups have you joined?"

### 3.2.1.2. Interaction in Live offline performance

The offline hip-hop live shows in bars and LiveHouse have broken the rules of etiquette that people need to follow in their daily interactions to redefine the way and platform for crowd communication. They are fully immersed in the hip-hop group they belong to, returning to themselves and achieving social identity through a shared love of hip-hop music.

In the interview, BinWang said, "I go to LiveHouse a lot now, and I think it is when you go to a live show that you can more truly feel this power in the bones of hip-hop music, which is that you can go without restraint and release it with everyone at the venue. Moreover, I think live hip-hop is more real, rappers will freestyle according to what is happening at the show, and it feels real and not pretentious." The offline live shows became an essential medium for interaction between hip-hop fans and between hip-hop fans and their preferred rappers.

On the Figure 4, 71.76% of hip-hop fans said they had been to offline shows, with 26.72% of hip-hop fans participating in frequent offline activities and another 28.24% of hip-hop fans saying that they had never been but had the will to go. This shows that hip-hop fans are also active offline.

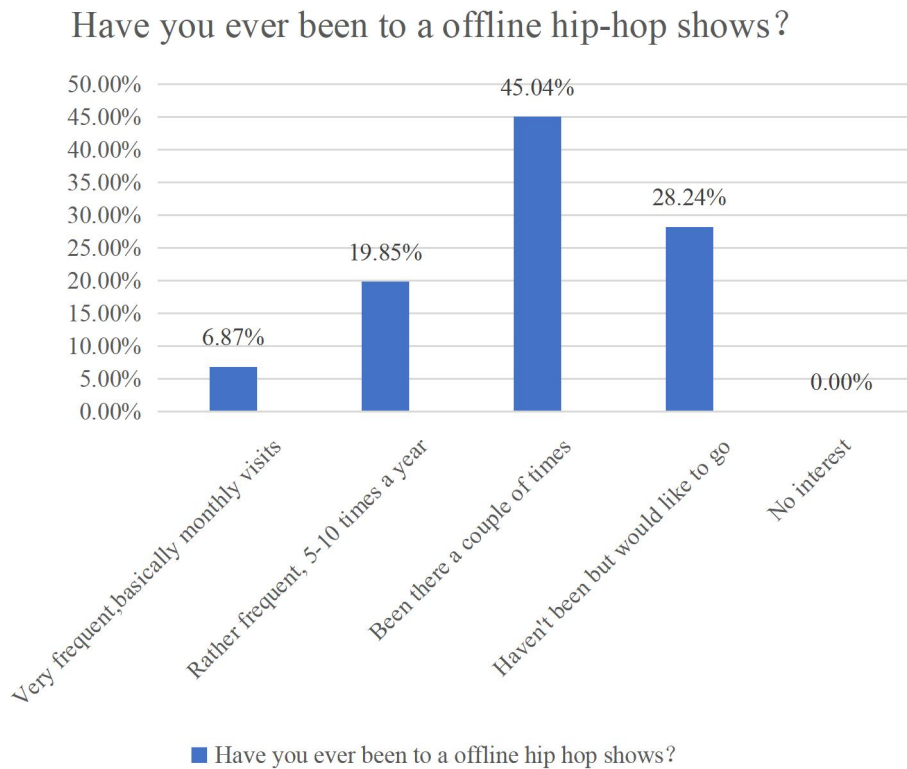


Figure 4: Questionnaire: "Have you ever been to an offline hip-hop show?"

### 3.2.2. Interaction with Out-groups: Fighting for the "Legitimacy" of Hip-Hop

Since its development, hip-hop culture has always carried a negative stigma in China. Originating in American black neighborhoods, hip-hop itself was a mapping of the social environment of the time, making its content rebellious to mainstream culture and often associated with criminal behavior such as drugs and robbery. The amount of foul language, violence, and crime in hip-hop music also made it unacceptable to mainstream America for a long time.

In 2017, along with the broadcast of "The Rap of China", a group of rappers came into the public eye. The champion of "The Rap of China", PGone, sparked discussions on the Internet about the moral values of hip-hop fans due to his personal life issues. Subsequently, the mainstream media criticized one of his songs for allegedly abetting drug use among teenagers and publicly insulting women. Negative labels such as "moral degeneration", "vulgarity," and "unacceptable" have been attached to hip-hop artists and hip-hop culture.

In the face of mainstream culture's rejection of hip-hop culture, especially the stigmatization of hip-hop in the mass media, hip-hop fan groups are trying to gain social acceptance and seek "legitimacy" for their identity through their practices. On the one hand, hip-hop fans are trying to reverse the negative image of hip-hop culture in the mass media and in the minds of audiences. On the other hand, they are actively expanding their group's scope, trying to gain more "out-group" members into the hip-hop community.

"It is normal to have negative comments. The roots of hip-hop are such that it is inherently characterized by black culture in the American environment at the time. For me, as a Chinese, it is important to be able to distinguish between what is listened to for fun and what can be listened to in order to think about the source of the inequality they are subjected to, especially when hearing about hedonism (money, beauty, drugs) or something violent (gangs, guns). This part of the culture

requires a certain amount of 'filtering', but at the same time, the resistance against social injustice, the exploration of the self, the discussion of freedom, including the struggle from having nothing, to having it all, these themes are part of the culture that I think is very important to absorb in hip-hop critically. That is what appeals to me the most." -- Mr. Wu said.

"The slammed phenomenon in the media exists, but it is not the whole story. At least when I write and perform, I never make things like foul language and sex a necessity in my lyrics, and what is important is a reflection on reality and an expression of attitude. As a hip-hop music creator, I hope more people will come to understand hip-hop and know what it is really like. You can not understand or accept it, but I hope not to start discrediting it without understanding it. It feels like something you love and being told by someone else that it is worthless." --Astro said.

Within the hip-hop community, both individuals who are both fans and creators and those who are only fans are attempting to fight for an objective judgment of hip-hop culture. This confrontation with the negative perceptions of mainstream culture coincides with the "resistance" rooted in hip-hop culture. The hip-hop community is fighting for the "legitimacy" of hip-hop while at the same time achieving social identity.

#### 4. Conclusions

As an imported product, the localization of hip-hop culture in China has not been a smooth process. However, it has brought Chinese youth a young, vibrant, and individualistic culture. The identity construction of hip-hop fans can be divided into two aspects: an individual-focused self-identity and a social identity that emphasizes the interaction of individuals with other individuals or groups.

In addition to attempting to achieve their ideal selves through hip-hop culture, hip-hop fans also seek to achieve self-identity by resonating with hip-hop music and consuming a series of hip-hop-related products. Social identity highlights interaction, with hip-hop fans actively differentiating themselves from other fan groups, reinforcing identification with hip-hop culture and the hip-hop fan group. Hip-hop fans actively interact with "in-group" members and favorite rappers through participation in online and offline events, thus deepening social identity. Besides, as hip-hop culture has clashed with Chinese mainstream culture, this has led to many negative comments from "out-groups" about hip-hop culture. In order to defend their favorite culture, hip-hop fans will actively interact with "out-groups" to fight for the "legitimacy" of hip-hop. In this process, hip-hop fans continuously achieve social identity.

Understanding how hip-hop fans construct their identities helps better understand this emerging group, including their motivations, psychological activities, and cultural needs. It is also an opportunity to analyze the reasons for the rise of hip-hop culture in China from hip-hop fans' perspective and take a more rational and objective attitude towards the development of hip-hop culture. This will have great value in promoting cultural diversity in China.

The inclusive and open nature of hip-hop culture has led to a constant enrichment of its cultural connotations and the entry of new participants into its fan groups, making the size and composition of the group increasingly complex. During its development in China, with the involvement of mass media and the consumer industry, hip-hop culture has formed a complicated interaction with mainstream culture. The established identity within the hip-hop community has been impacted, showing identity pluralism and group differentiation characteristics. However, this study does not explore this point in-depth, for the author's capacity is limited. Future research could be focused on the polarization of identities of hip-hop fans in the interaction between mainstream culture and hip-hop culture and possible identity crises emerging in the cultural collision.

## References

- [1] Martinez, T.A. (1997). *Popular culture as oppositional culture: Rap as resistance*. *Sociological Perspectives*, 40(2), 265-286.
- [2] Retrieved from <https://www.iqiyi.com/common/20170919/1bdcd3a648a3585f.html>
- [3] Jenkins, H. (2012). *Textual poachers: Television fans and participatory culture*. Routledge.
- [4] Gray, J., Sandvoss, C., & Harrington, C.L. (Eds.). (2017). *Fandom: Identities and communities in a mediated world*. NYU Press.
- [5] Jensen, J. (2002). *Fandom as pathology: The consequences of characterization*. In *The adoring audience* (pp. 9-29). Routledge.
- [6] Weijia, D.E.N.G. (2009). *Recent Advances of Fan Studies in the Occident*. *Journal of International Communication*.
- [7] Grosser A (2007) *Les identités difficiles*. Institut d' Etudes Politiques de Paris, Paris
- [8] Giddens, A. (2020). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. In *The new social theory reader* (pp. 354-361). Routledge.
- [9] Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories* (p. 6). Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- [10] Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations*. Fifth edition. Free Press: New York.
- [11] Roudinesco, E., & Bray, B. T. (1997). *Jacques Lacan*. Columbia University Press.
- [12] Goffman, E. (2021). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor.
- [13] Featherstone, M. (2007). *Consumer culture and postmodernism*. Sage.
- [14] Romero, E. (2012). *Free Stylin': How Hip Hop Changed the Fashion Industry: How Hip Hop Changed the Fashion Industry*. ABC-CLIO.
- [15] Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). *An integrative theory of intergroup conflict*. *Organizational identity: A reader*, 56(65), 9780203505984-16.

## Appendix

Table : Interviewee information.

Name	Gender	Age	Interview Time	How long as a fan
Shenny	Female	19	2022.5.1	3 years
dzy	Female	18	2022.5.2	1 year
BinWang	Male	21	2022.5.3	5 years
Astro	Male	21	2022.5.3	7 years
January	Male	20	2022.5.4	3 years
Charlie	Female	21	2022.5.6	5 years
Mr.Wu	Male	22	2022.5.7	8 years
Joyce	Female	21	2022.5.7	2 years