

International Aspects of Recent Phenomena in Media and Culture

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Edited by

Martin A. M. Gansinger and Ayman Kole

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Dedicated to Gerda, Ismael, Ahmed-Nouri and Loubna

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FOREWORD

In his brilliant translation of the I Ching and the Zhouyi—the older, pre-Confucian Taoist version of the ancient Asian wisdom “Book of Changes” which inspired Leibniz’ binary number system, hence, the mysterious prophetic messenger of our digital age—Stephen Karcher provides the following interpretation for the first out of sixty-four hexagrams: “Heaven and Earth exist without beginning and end. This is the primal power of inspiration.”¹

Over the last few decades, a lot of raw seeds have been planted in the digitally fertilized soil of the media landscape and the cultural industry—and grown constantly ever since. From subcultural phenomena like arcade video games or rap music, that made it from shady street corners to the limelight of global appreciation, serving as trend-setting laboratories for future developments, to former start-up companies like Google and Facebook, that now hold the world in their silicon grip—the fruits are now ripe for the harvest. This book is an attempt to provide a selection of areas in the vast field of media and culture that have left their humble beginnings behind and are operating on a world stage now. On the other side of things, attention is being directed towards areas of past achievements that started to provide reasons for concern in recent times, such as the fake news phenomenon or increasing tendencies of restricted journalistic freedom.

The opening chapter explores recent considerations of the age-old discussion about media and violence. It especially focuses on the desensitization caused by media content such as violent movies and gangsta rap and its possible impact on real-life behaviour. Furthermore, the consequences regarding the observable migration of gang violence into social media channels and its possible escalating or rather deescalating factor is being discussed.

Chapter Two deals with the impressive transition of battle rap from an underground phenomenon to a global media industry in recent years. It presents an analysis of how this authentic public platform serves as a counterpart to the commercial limitations and self-censorship of recording artists via the non-compromising articulation of pressing social and political

¹ Stephen Karcher, *Total I Ching. Myths for Change* (London: Piatkus, 2009), 82.

issues. In addition, it also managed to inspire and influence the creative output of commercial artists.

Chapter Three portrays the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement from a protest group against local incidents to an international structure of organized articulation, bringing issues of global inequalities in the form of systemic racism to a worldwide attention in a counter-narrative that challenged mainstream reports upon the demonstrations.

Since its early beginnings in the arcades, video games have been accused to trigger violent actions among the, often, youthful gamers. The development of the media genre from being celebrated among nerds and outsiders into one of the most important entertainment industries of the present age is being outlined in Chapter Four. Next to its role as a cutting-edge laboratory for technological advances, the focus here lies on the relevance of the genre for the negotiation of cultural and political perspectives. This also includes the attitude towards female players in the context of online games and current changes in the representation of ethnicities and gender roles in video games.

The following contribution portrays the development of the Turkish movie industry that went from one of the most notorious copyright pirates—Turkish Star Wars, Turkish Spiderman, Turkish Star Trek, Turkish Batman, Turkish *everything*—to the ever more professionally soap opera productions of recent years, known and appreciated as *dizi* by audiences all over the world. The discussion highlights the relevance of the productions as a highly efficient arm of public diplomacy, influencing the perception of and reflection on social norms and behaviours in the whole Arab region, and a major contributing factor for the Turkish tourism industry.

In Chapter Six, the cases of Charlie Hebdo and Samuel Paty are singled-out, in an effort, to demonstrate the influence of a globalized media and communication system on the area of international relations and countries' foreign policy. Chapter Seven of this volume provides a discussion of media trust and the embrace of citizen journalism in the Middle-Eastern region and offers prospective recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Eight focuses on the development of media institutions in the Arab world under the influence of growing satellite networks and rigid forms of governmental censorship. The latter phenomenon is singled out and dealt with in the following chapter, focusing on the situation in Morocco in particular.

Hence, Chapter Nine offers a general overview on the development of media use in the Maghreb kingdom. The underlying issue of shifts in credibility is contrasted in Chapter Ten by an analysis of “fake news” on social media and its impact on the Covid-19 situation during the lockdown

in Morocco. The contribution provides an overview on the government's reaction to the situation, Law 22-20, as well as putting the interpretation of truth in perspective by referring to the relativist point of view.

The closing chapter explores the systematic state censorship as practiced by the ruling Communist Party in China and discusses how the country served as a role-model during the COVID-19 pandemic and witnessed its authoritative and radical measurements of technologically reinforced restricted movement and severe information control becoming the global norm within weeks. It sheds a light on how the Asian giant may not only be the dominating force in terms of economic growth but also lead the way towards a crucially different system of society, with the pandemic leading the way for an international implementation of the social credit system and a dystopian technocracy.

Many more examples could have been selected, as the wheel keeps on turning and established institutions will continue to be replaced by what at this very moment starts as a creative spark, an inspiration, an idea, in one of the corners of this world—destined to take the lead and dominate and define the nature and development and future societies. In the words of Stephen Karcher's interpretation of the closing Hexagram 64/Wei Ji: "Not yet crossing: On the edge of a change; gather your energy; everything is possible; wait for the right moment; prima materia; the burning water; a primal seed figure."²

Martin A. M. Gansinger, Ayman Kole, September 2021

² Karcher, Stephen, *Total I Ching. Myths for Change* (London: Piatkus, 2009), 434.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM HOME VIDEO VIOLENCE TO HOMIES GONE VIOLENT: THE WEAPONS EFFECT, GANGSTA RAP, AND DESENSITIZED MEDIA AUDIENCES

AYMAN KOLE, HALIL ERCAN,
AND MARTIN A. M. GANSINGER

Introduction

As demonstrated by Petley,¹ in the UK, during the video cassette boom of the early 1980s, it became essential for the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) to index films in accordance with their theatrical certification. In other words, films were unable to be distributed, released, sold, or rented on home video unless they were classified by the Board. Initially, since its activation in 1979, in a relatively short period, the popularity of the home video rental system increased enough to pose a threat to theatrical releases. As a matter of fact, the home rental system which was not subjected to censorship in its early days was gaining recognition as harmful. Whereas scenes of violence, sex, or animal cruelty were censored by the BBFC for theatrical runs, the home video market had released these films in their uncensored versions. Therefore, not only was the home video market perceived as a threat to cinema-owners, consequently, in a larger context, it was considered a threat to societal interests and values.

The widening acceptance of the home video market showed a negative impact on cinema chains as a decrease in the ticket-purchasing theatrical audience became noticeable. Moreover, home video opened channels for the availability of cheaply made exploitation films whose video

¹ Julian Petley, "Are We Insane? The video nasty moral panic," *Recherches Sociologiques Et Anthropologiques* 43, No. 1 (2012): 35-57.

distribution rights could be bought at very low costs. As a result, films with inferior production values or softcore productions with raunchy artwork stacked the shelves of the local video stores. It was also speculated that children who have already become accustomed to using the video player in schools, were highly at risk as there were no real means of control concerning the expanding home entertainment industry. Indeed, uncensored films distributed on video cassette displaying intact scenes of violence, degradation, and horror material called for a series of moral barricades to be installed in the name of classification and censorship. Therefore, the immense volume of prolific violent B-grade fare described as video-nasties with titles such as Abel Ferrara's *The Driller Killer*² eventually led to the passing of the Video Recording Act in 1984.³

Influence of media violence on real-life behaviour

According to LoBue, Kim, and Delgado⁴ however, as we fast forward to today, parents are certainly faced with a greater problem than the mere control of the video player, which had been replaced by the DVD player, which, in turn, has itself now mostly become defunct from households and educational institutions. Instead, parents are faced with more pressing issues of harmful media thanks to freely and easily downloadable content on the internet, violent video games, movies, television programs, and streaming services which are all alarmingly commonplace.

In fact, although research about the connection between violent media and the aggressive behaviour of children had been conducted since the 1970s,⁵ recent investigation unsurprisingly further cement these findings. For instance, noteworthy are the experiments conducted by Dillon and Bushman⁶ involving two groups of children aged between eight and twelve years who were shown twenty-minute footage of the films *National*

² Abel Ferrara, *The Driller Killer* (New York: Navaron Films, 1979).

³ Frank A. Sharman, "The video recordings act, 1984," *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* 2, No. 1 (1986): 112-118.

⁴ LoBue, Vanessa, Kim, Emily, and Delgado Mauricio. "Fear in development." In *Handbook of Emotional Development*, eds. Vanessa LoBue, Koraly Pérez-Edgar, and Kristin A. Buss (Cham: Springer, 2019), 257-282.

⁵ Ronald S. Drabman, and Margaret H. Thomas, "Does media violence increase children's toleration of real-life aggression?," *Developmental Psychology* 10, No. 3 (1974): 418-421.

⁶ Kelly P. Dillon, and Brad J. Bushman, "Effects of exposure to gun violence in movies on children's interest in real guns," *JAMA pediatrics* 17, No. 11 (2017): 1057-1062.

*Treasure*⁷ and *The Rocketeer*.⁸ Accordingly, one group of children viewed the action scenes with guns-blazing, while the other group watched the footage with the gunplay edited out. As predicted, when placed in a playroom directly after the viewing session, the group who witnessed the movie with the gun scenes intact played more aggressively with their Legos and other toys. As an important result of this research, it could be suggested that violence-included media products such as cartoons or animated movies should be removed for children during their watching times in order not to get them to have that tendency to become aggressive individuals.

Further, since gun-integrated cartoons influence the children in negative ways and play a crucial role in shaping them in a more aggressive manner during this vulnerable stage of growing up, their choices of entertainment content should be closely monitored. In fact, being exposed to seeing toy guns in the media would always bring the tendency to become aggressive in humans' lives. Romer et al.⁹ strongly pointed out that having guns in movie scenes has an influence on children and adults prone to violence. Therefore, all the stakeholders such as film directors and producers, and those who take part in these movies or contribute to this field need to consider that what they create may have negative effects on other peoples' lives which may not be so easily overcome. Besides, the mentioned experiment of Dillon and Bushman¹⁰ did not conclude at this point but was ongoing as an unloaded 0.38-Caliber handgun—modified to record how many times the trigger would be pulled—was placed in one of the playing room drawers for the children to discover. Interestingly, out of the children who located the item the group that watched the movie with uncut gun footage played with the gun longer, pulled the trigger numerous times, aimed the gun out the window at people walking on the street, and at least one child placed the gun at another child's temple and repeatedly pulled the trigger.

Equally important, it was observed that almost none of the children who had viewed the footage with the gun sequences removed pulled the trigger. It must also be acknowledged that the aggression detected in the exposed children was brought upon by relatively mild action footage from movies rated PG (Parental Guidance) and would obviously pale in comparison with violent video games and easily accessible action movies

⁷ Jon Turteltaub, *National Treasure* (Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures, 2004).

⁸ Joe Johnston, *The Rocketeer* (Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures, 1991).

⁹ Daniel Romer, Patrick E. Jamieson, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Robert Lull, and Azeez Adebimpe, "Parental Desensitization to Gun Violence in PG-13 Movies," *Pediatrics* 141, No. 6 (June 2018): e20173491.

¹⁰ Dillon and Bushman, "Effects of exposure."

rated as R (Restricted) that emphasize or glorify destruction and brutal mayhem at full running time.

In an article for CNN, Sasha Emmons¹¹ relates a parent's cause for alarm when her three-year-old son converted Tinker toys and tennis rackets to pretend guns after a viewing of *Star Wars*,¹² even though the parent had gone through extremes to keep the child-playing environment free from any sort of toy guns, including water pistols. Some experts classify this as quite normal, as a fair amount of cowboys-and-Indians-style play that allows the child to differentiate between good and evil must be allowed. Yet, other authorities argue that if the child constantly sees themselves as the "good guy", then any other who disagrees with him or her must be seen as the "bad guy." On the other hand, media experts clearly identify prolonged exposure to media violence as a risk factor but are also quick to inform that there is no single factor that fuels aggression in children.¹³

As a matter of fact, the study of gun presence inducing aggressive thinking or behaviour is referred to as the "weapons effect."¹⁴ According to this field of work, guns can prime people to act aggressively and film producers and video game developers are contributing or could be the cause of this problem.¹⁵ Yet, other experts doubt the significance of the media influencing future violence and would rather link this to past antisocial or violent behaviour outside the boundary of media.¹⁶ In addition, according to Robertson, MacAnally, and Hancox,¹⁷ adults who grew up watching huge amounts of television during their childhood and teenage years are more likely to develop antisocial tendencies than those who have not. This specific study grimly suggests that such people are also more likely to end

¹¹Sasha Emmons, "Is media violence damaging to kids?," *CNN*, February 21, 2013. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/02/21/living/parenting-kids-violence-media/index.html>.

¹² George Lucas, *Star Wars* (San Francisco: Lucasfilm, 1977).

¹³ Craig A. Anderson et al., "Media violence and other aggression risk factors in seven nations," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43, No. 7 (2017): 986-998.

¹⁴ Arlin J. Benjamin Jr., and Brad J. Bushman, "The Weapons Effect", *Current Opinion in Psychology* 19 (2018): 93-97.

¹⁵ Russell G. Geen, and Susan L. Thomas, "The immediate effects of media violence on behavior," *Journal of Social Issues* 42, No. 3 (1986): 7-27.

¹⁶ L. Rowell Huesmann, "Psychological processes promoting the relation between exposure to media violence and aggressive behavior by the viewer," *Journal of Social Issues* 42, No. 3 (1986): 125-139.

¹⁷ Lindsay A. Robertson, Helena McAnally, and Robert J. Hancox, "Childhood and adolescent television viewing and antisocial behavior in early adulthood," *Pediatrics* 131, No. 3 (2013): 439-446.

up in prison. Indeed, the study does highlight rather alarming, if not disturbing, findings such as the connection of the rise of risk for antisocial behaviour by thirty percent for every hour of television consumed by teenagers and children on a weekly basis. To determine the actualities of these findings, a group of one-thousand children from ages five to fifteen were tracked through their television viewing habits right up to the age of twenty-six.

One of the reasons for this study conducted at the University of Otago was that although there were many studies concerning television violence impacting on aggressive patterns, antagonism, and alienation among children; in comparison, there were not many regarding the more long-term effects in later life. As a result, explanations revolved around the likelihood of imitation, internalization as well as emotional desensitization as a response to increased violent exposure on television. Thus, the limiting of television exposure and the incessant monitoring of age-appropriate material was highly recommended to the responsible parent or carer.

Another study conducted by Bandura et al.¹⁸ on violence during the childhood period revealed that children would also learn through modelling, watching, and imitating adults around them. Furthermore, it was reported that the children who watched adults on media with violence-included scenes had the tendency to be more aggressive in their real-life during their playtimes. To explore further, through these studies it was uncovered that even pre-schoolers demonstrated aggressive behaviours after viewing violent cartoons by pushing or hitting playmates and were more likely to disobey instructions from their teachers.

Once again, children were founded to be desensitized after viewing violent content and playing battle-themed video games, openly becoming less empathetic, and less sensitive to the suffering and pain of the other. Moreover, the popularity of military video games has vastly contributed to the mentioned anesthetizing or emotionally numbing qualities. Some researchers argue that these video games resemble army training techniques employed to desensitize soldiers into pulling the trigger without remorse.¹⁹

¹⁸ Albert Bandura, Dorothea Ross, Sheila A. Ross, "Transmission of aggression through imitation of aggressive models," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63, No. 3 (1961): 575-582.

¹⁹ Robin Andersen, and Marin Kurti, "From America's Army to Call of Duty: Doing battle with the military entertainment complex," *Democratic Communiqué* 23, No. 1 (2009): 45-65.

Desensitization through violent media content

The argument is made that real-looking violent video games guide children into automaticity; that is, the adopting of a behaviour to the extent that it merely becomes reflexive.²⁰ Equally important, as specified by Levy and Orleans,²¹ according to Wayne State University's Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Emanuel Tanay, the reality is distorted through the abundance of media's fictional world to the point where the fictional is perceived as the real. Tanay also notes that a high number of homicides are committed by individuals who are familiar with each other, sparked on by a sudden conflict with the availability of a nearby weapon. Furthermore, Tanay explains that the mentally ill are most vulnerable to dramatized violence due to misinterpretation and that almost two-thirds of TV programs are composed of images that can be described as physically violent, which in turn, are contributing to these unfortunate cases.

As pointed out by Kaplan,²² two teenage boys in Colorado at the Columbine High School killed a teacher and twelve schoolmates. Additionally, they injured twenty-one people just before killing themselves. It did not take long before the tragedy was attributed to watching violent videos driving their behaviour during the crime, and its malicious planning beforehand.²³ Subsequently, the FBI argued that the teenage boys were mentally ill. On the other hand, some psychiatrists, psychologists, and analysts reported that the teenagers had obsessions due to violent media and therefore, incessant exposure to these types of content led them to depersonalize their victims.²⁴

²⁰ Corey Mead, *War play: Video games and the future of armed conflict* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

²¹ Levy, Terry M., and Orleans, Michael. "Attachment disorder as an antecedent to violence and antisocial patterns in children." In *Handbook of Attachment Interventions*, ed. Terry M. Levy (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001), 1-26.

²² Arline Kaplan, "Violence in the media: what effects on behavior?," *Psychiatric Times* 29, No. 10 (2012): 1-1.

²³ Gary W. Giumetti, and Patrick M. Markey, "Violent video games and anger as predictors of Aggression," *Journal of Research in Personality* 41, No. 6 (2007): 1234-1243.

²⁴ Patrick M. Markey, and Charlotte N. Markey, "Vulnerability to violent video games: A review and integration of personality research," *Review of General Psychology* 14, No. 2 (2010): 82-91.

However, Ferguson²⁵ argued that the literature has no evidence on proving whether the mass homicides are due to the violent-included media products such as cartoons, films, or advertisements. Yet, a report by the US Secret Service and Department of Education in 2002 revealed that amongst thirty-seven school attacks from 1974 to 2000, more than half of the attackers were influenced by the violence through movies, books, video games, and other media products²⁶. In addition, the American Academy of Paediatrics²⁷ stated that the evidence from empirical studies on media violence had a significant effect on aggressive behaviour and might contribute to desensitization to violence. Moreover, it was also emphasized that the results from violence-related reports could cause people to have nightmares and trigger their fear to feel harmed. Likewise, in a report by the Media Violence Commission of the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA),²⁸ it was pointed out that many studies which have been designed on media violence for the last fifty years showed that watching violence-integrated movies and playing violent games had a high-level potential on making people increase their possibility of aggressive behaviour. According to a longitudinal study done by Willoughby, Adachi, and Good,²⁹ a group of experts questioned some teachers as well as children and their peers in a school setting for a year to reveal whether watching violent videos and playing violent games had influences on their behaviours. Researchers proved that both female and male students who played a great number of violent games had the tendency to change over a year. At the end of the study, aggressive behaviours were observed by the experts. In contrast, no evidence was found about children becoming more aggressive over three

²⁵ Christopher J. Ferguson, "Does media violence predict societal violence? It depends on what you look at and when," *Journal of Communication* 65, No. 1 (February 2015): E1-E22.

²⁶ Kristine M. Augustyniak, "Integration of Federal Bureau of Investigation and United States Secret Service/Department of Education threat assessment models into a conceptual framework for prevention of school violence," *Journal of School Violence* 4, No. 2 (2005): 29-46.

²⁷ American Academy of Pediatrics, "Policy statement--Media violence," *Pediatrics* 124, No. 5 (2009): 1495-1503.

²⁸ Brad J. Bushman, et al., "Risk factors for youth violence: Youth violence commission, International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA), *Aggressive Behavior* 44 (2018): 331-336.

²⁹ Teena Willoughby, Paul J. C. Adachi, and Marie Good, "A longitudinal study of the association between violent video game play and aggression among adolescents," *Developmental psychology* 48, No. 4 (2012): 1044-1057.

years in a study done by Ferguson and his colleagues.³⁰ The study investigated one hundred and sixty-five children aged from ten to fourteen to reveal whether there was a link between playing violent games and becoming aggressive over three years. Studies that have been conducted in Germany, Singapore, Japan, the US, and Portugal have revealed that the relationship between becoming aggressive and media violence seemed to be similar across cultures.³¹ People from these cultures tend to show similar behaviours after watching violent films or playing violent games.

What is more, according to a study by Anderson and Dill,³² being exposed to fast-paced violent games could lead to brain disorder since the individual could recall and associate traumatic images during their playing. As can be seen, it could be stated that these primary studies contributed to the literature with their own focuses on violence in media products and their effects on those who are exposed to them. The outcomes revealed that especially young people have the tendencies to be influenced and affected negatively.

Gangsta rap and gang violence 2.0: from MAC-10s to iMacs

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence and worldwide commercial success of the gangsta rap genre that derives its motives to a big degree around the glorification of gun violence. Herd³³ states that violence as a topic in rap songs has increased from twenty-seven percent between 1979 and 1984 to sixty percent during 1994 and 1997. West Coast gangsta rap artists like N.W.A., Ice-T, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Dr. Dre, MC Eiht, or Mack 10 took the Bloods and Crips gang wars into the musical arena and built their rhymes around tales of low riders, drugs, and drive-by shootings.

The global commercial impact of gangsta rap and the rise to fame of international superstars like Tupac or Snoop Doggy Dogg also managed

³⁰ Christopher J. Ferguson, et al., “Violent video games and aggression: Causal relationship or byproduct of family violence and intrinsic violence motivation?,” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35, No. 3 (2008): 311-332.

³¹ Robert Busching, et al., “Testing the reliability and validity of different measures of violent video game use in the United States, Singapore, and Germany,” *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 4, No. 2 (2015): 97-111.

³² Craig A. Anderson, and Karen E. Dill, “Video games and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the laboratory and in life,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78, No. 4 (2000): 772-790.

³³ Denise Herd, “Changing images of violence in rap music lyrics: 1979–1997,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 30, No. 4 (2009): 395-406.

to export the notorious rivalry of the local gangs concerning territory and influence over Los Angeles street-corners all around the globe. Roks and Densley³⁴ point towards the direct influence of myth-building around the two gangs, generated and transported by vehicles such as gangsta rap or influential movies such as “New Jack City”³⁵ that featured gangsta rap icon Ice-T, and processes of migration, mimicry and glocalization. The authors trace the origin of the Dutch branch of the Crips to Hip Hop culture and The Hague breakdance crew C.U.C.—short for “Call Us Cool.”

With gangsta rap providing a huge boost to the genre and therefore switching attention from elements such as breakdance and graffiti towards the music, members reformed as a rap group and fully embraced the lifestyle promoted by their US-American idols, hence “Call Us Cool” was replaced with “Crazy Underground Criminals.” The final re-interpretation of the initials as “Criminal Underground Crips” is being described to have happened after watching the movie “Colors”³⁶ in 1988 and Hip Hop-affiliation is referred to as a major influence on the group identity. Similar narratives can be assumed regarding the international reverence of the gang in England³⁷ or Australia.³⁸

However, as Richardson and Scott³⁹ put it: “It is far too simplistic to portray rap artists as perpetrators of behaviour deemed socially deviant without placing the artists and their life experiences in context.” Ro⁴⁰ portrays the phenomenon as a reflection of an environment that values violence as an expression for the articulation of masculinity, and guns as tools for problem solutions. Rosen and Marks⁴¹ on the contrary suggest that “far from being an unprecedented art form that can only reflect the social

³⁴ Robert A. Roks, and James A. Densley, “From breakers to bikers: The evolution of the Dutch crips ‘gang’,” *Deviant Behavior* 41, No. 4 (2020), 525-542.

³⁵ Mario Van Peebles, *New Jack City* (Burbank: Warner Brothers, 1991).

³⁶ Dennis Hopper, *Colors*, (Los Angeles: Orion Pictures, 1988).

³⁷ Coretta Phillips, “‘It ain’t nothing like America with the Bloods and the Crips’: Gang narratives inside two English prisons,” *Punishment & Society* 14, No. 1 (2021): 51-68.

³⁸ Johns, Amelia. “Bloods, Crips and Southern Cross Soldiers: Gang Identities in Australia.” In *A Critical Youth Studies for the 21st Century*, eds. Peter Kelly, and Annelies Kamp (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 299-316.

³⁹ Jeanita W. Richardson, and Kim A. Scott, “Rap music and its violent progeny: America’s culture of violence in context,” *Journal of Negro Education* 71, No. 3 (2002): 175.

⁴⁰ Ronin Ro, *Gangsta: Merchandizing the rhymes of violence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

⁴¹ Ralph M. Rosen, and Donald R. Marks, “Comedies of transgression in gangsta rap and ancient classical poetry,” *New Literary History* 30, No. 4 (1999): 897.

pathologies idiosyncratic to American ghetto life, gangsta rap operates within a well-documented poetic tradition within African American culture that ritualizes invective, satire, obscenity, and other verbal phenomena with transgressive aims.”

Although gangsta rap remained a huge commercial success for a large part of the 1990s especially among white kids from the suburbs and left an enormous influence on rap music in general—East Coast acts such as Smif-n-Wessun, the Originoo Gunn Clappaz, or Capone n’ Noreaga come to mind—research suggests that its messages are interpreted in a differentiated manner.⁴² Watts⁴³ argues for the consideration of gangsta rap as a cultural commodity and introduces the concept of “spectacular consumption,” which corresponds to the perspective of Sernhede,⁴⁴ who points towards the tabooization of death and violence among the social environment of the white middle-class audiences that are turning towards the music in a search for exotism and intensity. Lauger and Densley⁴⁵ recently noted that gang members have carried their rivalries from street corners to social media platforms, where rap performances posted on YouTube are used to deliver threats and intimidations. However, while earlier on it has been estimated that turning to “internet banging” and the migration of conflicts into virtual space might contribute to a decrease in real-life violence⁴⁶, although recent research seems to suggest the opposite. In a study titled “When Twitter Fingers Turn to Trigger Fingers”⁴⁷, Patton et al. provide evidence for corresponding dynamics between rival gangs in the South Side of Chicago. They categorized three forms of online content,

⁴² Jabari Mahiri, and Erin Conner, “Black youth violence has a bad rap,” *Journal of Social Issues* 59, No. 1 (2003): 121-140.

⁴³ Eric K. Watts, “An exploration of spectacular consumption: Gangsta rap as cultural Commodity,” *Communication Studies* 48, No. 1 (1997): 42-58.

⁴⁴ Sernhede, Ove. “Exoticism and death as a modern taboo: Gangsta rap and the search for Intensity.” In *Without Guarantees. In Honour of Stuart Hall*, eds. Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie (London, New York: Verso, 2000), 302-318.

⁴⁵ Timothy Lauger, and James A. Densley, “Broadcasting badness: Violence, identity, and performance in the online gang rap scene,” *Justice Quarterly* 35, No. 5 (2018): 816-841.

⁴⁶ Desmond Upton Patton, Robert D. Eschmann, and Dirk A. Butler, “Internet banging: New trends in social media, gang violence, masculinity and hip hop,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 29, No. 5 (September 2013): A54-A59.

⁴⁷ Desmond Upton Patton, David Pyrooz, Scott Decker, William R. Frey, and Patrick Leonard, “When twitter fingers turn to trigger fingers: A qualitative study of social media-related gang violence,” *International Journal of Bullying Prevention* 1, No. 3 (2019): 205-217.

increasing in relation to the level of escalation, namely dissing, calling, and threatening.

Hence, the perspective of considering social media activities of gang members as possible triggers for assaults acted out in physical manifestations seems to gain more momentum in recent years.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as demonstrated by Patton et al.⁴⁹ in their article “Sticks, stones, and Facebook accounts,” although the use of social media channels to boast acts of violence in order to issue threats to rivals, recruit new gang members, or organize criminal activities has definitely increased among youth aged twelve to twenty-four, there is another side of the coin to this as well. Due to facilitated monitoring possibilities, crisis intervention could be enhanced as well, which helps to intervene or even prevent situations where “online-beef” is being taken to the streets.

Conclusion

Considering the amount of violent media content available around the world it could be claimed that many children and youth are being exposed and influenced by the products that the media provides them with. On the other hand, it is getting more difficult for parents to take control over their children’s media usage since there is a great increase in technology. Moreover, this trend leads the young generation to be shaped in line with the light of negative emotions such as anger and aggression. However, for the last ten years, the quality of time that should be spent with family members and the communication that ought to be observable is broken with a high level of smartphones usage in daily life. This situation limits the young generation’s real daily interaction with other people around them and therefore hinders participation related to other social activities. All these factors then become potential to direct the children and youth towards unexpected aggressive behaviours. However, on the other side the real-time documentation of intended acts of violence on social media channels also provides a chance to enhance the possibility for monitoring conflicts, cyber-bullying, or internet banging and intervene in time to prevent higher levels of escalation or physical harm. It seems as if it is getting more and more difficult for youngsters as well as for adults to meaningfully manage their

⁴⁸ Jooyoung Lee, *Blowin’ up: Rap Dreams in South Central* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

⁴⁹ Desmond Upton Patton, Robert D. Eschmann, Caitlin Elsaesser, and Eddie Bocanegra, “Sticks, stones and Facebook accounts: What violence outreach workers know about social media and urban-based gang violence in Chicago,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 65 (December 2016): 591-600.

time spent on consuming media content since it becomes an unconscious habit over time. Generations are changing with a great level of support by technology—and this also makes users around the world gravitate towards some undesirable behaviours promoted by violence-related media content. What more could be done to prevent this is still a big question that begs to be answered.

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CHAPTER TWO

BATTLE RAP VS THE WORLD: FROM THE STREET CORNER TO THE GLOBAL CIPHER

MARTIN A. M. GANSINGER, SUFIAN SHABAN,
AND OMAR TAMBAKTI

Introduction

Over the course of the last forty-eight years, Hip Hop culture has demonstrated a huge impact all around the world, as people from different cultures adopt their own styles and techniques to express themselves.¹ Rap has originally given a voice to African Americans for audiences all across the country and all around the globe to hear them and understand how they are using this phenomenon to speak against injustices they faced and are still facing.² Battle rap is a smaller segment of hip-hop culture, yet the power of words in battle rap is brutally fierce, blunt and vulgar, as opposed to a larger part of the rest of the culture.

Battle rappers have had a harder time in the past with issues of exposure, as mainstream rappers, R&B singers, soul and jazz musicians shared the limelight amongst themselves. However, and with the help of social media platforms such as YouTube, the practice has moved on from street corners and basements to the global media screen. In recent years, it became a global phenomenon with a hardcore following, as different countries around the world hold their own rap tournaments. As stated by

¹ H. Samy Alim, Alam Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook, eds., *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

² Martin A. M. Gansinger, *L'articulation sociale dans le hip-hop américain: structure communication d'une minorité sociale* (Paris: Éditions universitaires européennes, 2020).

Johnson and Schell-Busey³ battle rap originated from a game called “the dozens”, that boys played to insult each other through the use of rhymes, for the bemusement of their friends. The authors claim that “these rhymed exchanges contributed to the birth of rap and, in particular, the rap battle.”⁴

This chapter will explore how current players in the battle rap scene like Loaded Lux, Dizaster, Hollow Da Don and Daylyt have changed the phenomenon and put the practice on a global level. Lyricism, aggression, delivery, and experience is what differentiates the legends of battle rap from the simple contestants. It is during moments like these that battle rappers are at their prime lyricism and demonstrate that they can deliver a powerful punchline that will make the audience react in the most cheerful way possible. The phenomenon that is being dealt with throughout this chapter are the effects that battle rap and battle rappers have had on Hip Hop as a global culture. Also, it will be focusing on the ways in which battle rappers spread rap as an authentic part of Hip Hop culture throughout different parts of the world. Nowadays, battle rap has become more violent and controversial than ever, as rappers are expected to use stereotypes to insult each other, and the best lyrical insults often tend to be considered as the winning strikes. For this purpose, some of the most influential battles of the past ten years will be analyzed.

MCs act like they do know

While not all rappers manage to leave a good impression on the screen, even the harshest critic will agree that Ice-T’s performance in front of the camera has improved over time. Next to the reasonably successful Ice Cube, another recent example of rappers-turned-actors can be found in Lord Jamar of Brand Nubian playing a Five Percenter on the HBO series “Oz.” This involvement of rappers in the motion picture industry does not come as a surprise after all. The quality of a rap performance depends to a large degree on the convincing delivery of the rhymes—it’s not so much what you say but how you say it. Hence, the craft is built on a good dose of acting skills, and often enough artists take on the identity of an artificial character. This can reach from the simple adaptation of a rap name or an alter ego to the consistent personification of a well-defined role.

³ Joseph D. Johnson, and Natalie Schell-Busey, “Old Message in a New Bottle: Taking Gang Rivalries Online Through Rap Battle Music Videos on YouTube,” *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology* 4, No. 1 (2016): [online].

⁴ Johnson and Schell-Busey, “Old Message,” para 11.

As a matter of fact, what accounts as the first artifact of a recording that introduced the typical elements that rap got to be known for since the rise of gangsta rap in the mid-1980s, presents a very good example for the long tradition that theatrical performances possess in the genre. Leaving the outspokenly political rhetoric of his group The Last Poets aside, Jalal Mansur Nuriddin left the struggle for a moment and took on the identity of Lightnin' Rod on his groundbreaking concept album "Hustler's Convention."⁵ Providing a blueprint for much of what was about to come, the record narrates the story of two characters named Sport and Spoon and makes heavy use of audio drama elements which adds a strong cinematic flair to the performance.

A more recent example for roleplay elements in rap is Eminem's elaborately staged transformation from the Slim Shady character,⁶ to Marshall Mathers,⁷ and back to Eminem (Eminem, 2002),⁸ Del the Funky Homosapien's performance as his alter ego Deltron-Zero in the space opera-setting of the project *Deltron 3030*,⁹ MF Grimm's "The Downfall of Ibliys: A Ghetto Opera",¹⁰ Prince Paul's "A Prince Among Thieves",¹¹ or Kool Keith's cameo as Dr. Octagon,¹² just to name a few. The context of the battle rap environment takes these dynamics even further, since the performances are lacking the supportive function of the instrumentals—which carry a lot of weight in a performance and can make it easy for a rapper to sound impressive. The reduced setting of the battle rap cipher stripped down to the bare poetry, voice and delivery of the artist puts the event in proximity to a theater play in terms of intensity and impact. Subtle sonic dynamics of crescendo and descendo, as well as pose, facial expression, gesture, and posture, need to be carefully adjusted to the content of the rhymes in order for them to be effective. In other words: you have to say it like you mean it.

The phenomenological theory of acts¹³ emphasizes on different elements of human interaction, including speech and body language. As mentioned above, these are pillars of battle rap, as the demeanor of a battle

⁵ Lightnin' Rod, *Hustler's Convention* (New York: United Artists, 1973).

⁶ Eminem, *The Slim Shady LP* (Los Angeles: Interscope, 1999).

⁷ Eminem, *The Marshall Mathers LP* (Los Angeles: Interscope, 2000).

⁸ Eminem, *The Eminem Show* (Los Angeles: Interscope, 2002).

⁹ Deltron 3030, *Deltron 3030* (San Francisco: 75Ark, 2000).

¹⁰ MF Grimm, *The Downfall of Ibliys: A Ghetto Opera* (New York: Day to Day Entertainment, 2000).

¹¹ Prince Paul, *A Prince Among Thieves* (New York: Tommy Boy, 1999).

¹² Dr. Octagon, *Dr. Octagon* (London: Mo' Wax, 1996).

¹³ Alice Rayner, *To Act, to Do, to Perform: Drama and the Phenomenology of Action* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).