

Results and Insights from a Developmental Psychology Study on the Presentation of Juvenility in Punk Fanzines

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Abstract : Youth cultures like Punk as much as media relevant to the specific scenes associated with them offer ample opportunity for young people or juvenile adults to construct their personal identities. However, developmental psychology has largely neglected such identity construction processes during the last decades. Such was not always the case: Early developmental psychologists intensely studied youth cultures and their meaningful objects and media in the early 20th century but lost interest when cultural studies and the social sciences occupied the field after World War II. Our project *Constructions of Juvenility and Generation(ality)*, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, reintegrates the study of youth cultures and their meaningful objects and media in a developmental psychology perspective. We present an empirical study of the ways in which youth, juvenility, and generation (ality) are constructed and negotiated in underground media like punk fanzines (a portmanteau of fan and magazine), including both semantic and aesthetic aspects of these construction processes within punk culture. The fanzine sample was accessed by the theoretical sampling strategy typical for GTM studies. Acknowledging fanzines as artful self-produced media by scene members for scene members, we conceptualize them as authentic documents of scene norms and values. Drawing on an analysis of both text and (cover) images in Punk fanzines published in Germany (and within a sample dating from 1981 until 2015) using a novel Visual Grounded Theory approach, we found that: a) Juvenility is a highly contested concept in punk culture. Its semantic quality and valuation varies with the perspectives present within the culture (e.g. embryo punks versus older punks); b) Juvenility is constructed as having energy and being socio-critical that does not depend on biological age; c) Juvenility is regarded not an ideal per se in German Punk culture; Punk culture constructs old age in a largely positive way (e.g., as marker of being real and a historical innovator); d) Juvenility is constructed as a habit that should be kept for life as it is constantly adapted to individual biographical trajectories like specific job situations or having a family. Consequently, identity negotiation as documented in the zines attempts to balance subculturally driven perspectives on life and society with the pragmatic requirements of a bourgeois life. The proposed paper will present the main results of this large-scale study of punk fanzines and show how developmental psychology perspectives as represented in the novel methodology applied in it can advance the study of youth cultures.

Keywords : construction of juvenility, developmental psychology, visual GTM, youth culture, fanzines

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