

# The Anthropology of Hip-Hop in Japan

Hana Okai

Supervisor: John Ertl

## Summary

The objective of this research is to observe the effects of participation in hip hop dance for women in Japanese society with the use of anthropological theories and background literature. Specifically, the goal of this project is to demonstrate how hip hop dance serves as a space for women to enact outside of the strictly enforced social norms, allowing them to feel empowered. In this way, participation in hip hop for Japanese women not only shows the breach of social norms but exhibits possibilities of further gender barriers to be broken. Aside from gender normative aspects this thesis will discuss whether hip hop dance allows for Japanese women to be more expressive.

To appraise the extent to which hip hop can be an avenue for female empowerment in other parts of women's life in the society, the theory of performativity will be applied to assess the extent to which repetition of actions through hip hop dance allows for barriers of gender specific norms in terms of movement can be broken. A literary review of Ian Condry's ethnography on hip hop in Japan will serve as an introduction to how hip hop was introduced to Japan, and how it has grown since in terms of popularity.

It should be noted that background research and theoretical review of hip hop dance is the focal point of this thesis. There will be no fieldwork included aside from a mention of such work for future plans of the research, since a longer period of time will be necessary in order to conduct anthropological fieldwork. While it would be helpful to research other Asian countries besides Japan in order to gain further insight, the intention is to focus on the culture and society of Japan.