

# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN TEENIE-FANDOM: A TEENIE-FAN SURVEY ON MUSICAL INTERACTION IN FAN CULTURAL CONTEXTS

*Stefanie Rhein*

University of Education Ludwigsburg, Germany

## Background and Aims

Thinking about teenie-fans, most people have young female teenagers in mind who act fanatically or hysterically whenever their favourite star is in sight and whose musical interaction is generally referred to as passive. These stereotypes of teenie-fandom are challenged by a MultiMediaComputer-survey that takes a different theoretical approach to the phenomenon of fandom: It is looked upon as part of young people's selfsocialization and identity construction and as an active social process in the social context of the fan group. Fandom is understood as being a member of a youth culture that defines itself by a shared musical taste and a specific approach to popular music and is therefore distinct from other groups and persons such as non-fans or adults.

The results of the teenie-fan-study (N = 217) support this theoretical model of teenie-fandom: It can be shown that fans are active users of musical objects, they engage intensively and creatively in a greater variety of musical activities than non-fans. The social context of their musical taste and of their musical activities as well as the appropriation and presentation of expert knowledge concerning their favourite music is more important to them than to the non-fans in the sample.

The results also indicate that teenie-fandom is far from being a mere "female phenomenon" as it is stereotypically assumed: 57,2 % of the 166 participants that refer to themselves as fans are female, 42,8 % are male. The high proportion of male fans makes it possible to investigate potential gender differences among the fans in the sample and

to challenge the stereotypes referring to "female" teenie-fandom. In the secondary analysis presented here the theoretical approach will therefore be complemented by a gender perspective on fandom. Whereas the analytical focus of the original study was to compare fans and non-fans concerning their approaches to popular musical objects, the secondary analysis focuses on the question: Does it make a difference if a fan is male or female? The following hypotheses will be tested:

- Fans ascribe gender-specific social meanings to their fandom.
- Male and female fans differ in their approaches to popular musical objects.

## Method

217 11- to 15-year-olds participated in the project. They answered mainly closed, but also open format questions on their musical taste, their engagement in musical fan cultures, their use of popular musical objects, and their musical interaction in the peer context. The questions were presented to them as a MultiMedia-questionnaire on the computer. The secondary analysis will be carried out in spring 2003. The conclusions of the secondary analysis will refer to theories of gender specific and cultural contexts of music involvement.