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Socjologiczno-antropologiczne studium empiryczne subkultury młodzieżowej rap

SUMMARY

Social, political and cultural changes which took place in Poland, Ukraine and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 provided an opportunity to the free movement of musical styles popular in the US and Western Europe. The effects of these changes have been permanently embedded in the world of the youth and their style, particularly in rap style. Social injustice and inequality, a dream of righteous and stable world are the cause of rebellion and protest of the young generation of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. This defiance found its fulfillment in the lyrics of rap songs. People identifying with rap subculture pay special attention to the life problems of the youth, their own and their peers. Dynamically changing reality is very controversial, thought provoking and evokes extreme emotions. People who create the world of rap subculture observe the reality around them, often comment on it thereby express the failure to satisfy the need for a sense of security. And they give an expression of their artistic ambitions at the same time.

Rap is a cultural movement and musical genre that originated in the early 70s in the US. It gave young people a chance to freely express their opinions and anxieties provoked by reality in which they lived. It should be emphasized that the rapid development of rap was possible thanks to free access to the world until now remaining beyond the "Iron Curtain". Social problems such as poverty, unemployment, lack of prospects for a decent future, geopolitical situation or faith are more than often criticized in the lyrics of rap songs. Rhyming slang covered in music - rap, quickly became not only a way to express their emotions by young people, but even a style of life in a post-modern world full of contrasts and contradictions. It has its own language and image. It is a form of protest of young people against the reality that surrounds them.

The choice of the subject of this thesis was dictated firstly by the need for comparative analysis and systematization of the issue of multiplicity and fluidity of rap subculture as a symbol of post-modernism. Secondly, in my opinion, the youth rap subculture requires updated anthropological research directed toward identity and language of people who identify with this group. And thirdly, it was important to analyze the meanings ascribed to symbols and signs generally accepted in the subculture, but differentiated by Polish and Ukrainian national affiliation. Such beliefs influenced the structure of the research in which the source material were Polish and Ukrainian rap lyrics.

The analysis presented in this thesis is the result of research conducted in those two countries so close and yet so different from each other, both culturally and linguistically. The study included a total of 71 people and was carried out in 2013 in Poland and Ukraine. The aim was to identify and name the rap language elements used in the context of rebellion and protest among the Polish and Ukrainian youth. Also, the research was used to categorise and outline how the Polish and Ukrainian participants of this subculture defined the world around them.

Research of rap language embedded in the context of a subculture and understood as a symbol of the post-modern era, which was carried out on the territory of the two countries, provides a broad understanding of the issue of identity and its symbolic importance, because, as Tadeusz Paleczny says: "Identity is woven with symbols [...] is a very vast area bestowing identity diverse, changing cultural content". The results allow to verify the hypotheses posed in the dissertation.

The study shows that people who declared their affiliation with the subculture in question have problems with their own identity. Despite the whole research group stating their true interest in rap music, only 27 respondents equated only with this subculture, while 33 persons undertook active actions practicing graffiti, breakdance (26 persons), rapping (31 people) and DJ-ing (4 persons). 44 people out of the entire research group declared interest in more than one subculture. At the same time, 48 persons manifested a fatalistic attitude towards reality and stated that rap songs are an expression of their authors’ anxieties and touch upon important life issues (49 people.) Analysis of cultural signs and symbols, both verbal and graphical, revealed problems with denotation hence semiotic limitations of the respondents. It can therefore be assumed that the dissertation’s hypothesis was confirmed with the small exception. The studied youth declared very good and good financial situation, therefore it can be assumed that they were not socially marginalized. Only 16 people declared bad (14) and very poor (2) financial situation and we can assume that for those very people the rap songs lyrics are connoting rebellion against the reality and expression of protest. Views, external appearance, the music young people listen to are of great importance in the search for cultural identity. What favours this phenomenon is lack of clear boundaries between subcultures, as well as fragmentation and loosening ties within a group. Consequently, the opportunity to choose from an unlimited number of combinations of different elements, symbols and signs simultaneously coming from different cultural movements is being given. Heterogeneity, dissipation and diversity are in fact the

characteristic features of postmodern subculture. This gives unlimited possibilities for the young people's search for identity.

It is significant that the respondents find it difficult to denote and connote the cultural symbols. Meanings that lie behind the verbal and graphic signs and symbols, such as graffiti and "fuck you" are emotionally indifferent to the respondents. Graffiti, as a part of rap subculture connotes rebellion for 14 people, while it is the graffiti itself that is the most well-liked by the respondents form of hip-hop – 33 persons declared their interest in it and 21 stated that they actively cultivate it.

Image of a rapper implies rebellion to 19 people. It is a very interesting phenomenon, because the lyrics of rap, which are performed by rappers, are associated with rebellion by the vast majority of respondents (49 people). It must therefore be concluded that the rapper denotes rebellion only in a particular situation (the strict context), while performing rap songs. Apart from this situation, the image of the rapper is indifferent to the respondents and does not denote rebellion. Cultural symbols neutral to the respondents are rapper, brew (as a colloquial word for beer, *bro* in Polish), spliff, breakdance and bonehead (*„zakuta pała”* in Polish.) It is also worth noting that the term breakdance, which is closely associated with rap subculture, is (like the rapper) indifferent to the respondents. Cultural symbols that strongly connote rebellion are "fuck you", bombing, blokers (a term for a young person exhibiting anti-social behaviour, living in towerblocks, *blok* in Polish), and bitch. It should be concluded that the cultural symbol that connotes rebellion to the majority of people identifying with the rap subculture is a vulgarism of English origin, "fuck you".

The results indicate that the rap lyrics perform cognitive functions. Obscene language and phrases offered by the rappers are becoming a conceptual framework, coming mainly from the English language and being applied by the youth to the reality they experience. English language is known by 44 respondents, with 29 of them listening to their favorite music in this tongue. Conceptual framework, which imposes an impression of reality and a certain fatalistic view of the real world is contained in the lyrics which comment on the reality surrounding the respondents (58 persons), touch upon important life issues (49 people) and express the concerns of authors (48 people). Both in Poland and Ukraine, the social environment with which the respondents identify themselves, rejects the surrounding reality. Lyrics and the message they contain leave the respondents emotional and responsive. The degree of respondents' dissatisfaction with various elements of social reality is very high.

The transformations in the socio-political and economic grounds significantly contributed to the changes in the lifestyle of young people. This phenomenon is particularly evident among Polish and Ukrainian "generation of transformation". Rap music, or rap lyrics to be precise, comment on the current reality, but also dictate how it should be interpreted. Rap is a reflection of the reality experienced by rappers. Relationship between constructing of the world by people who declare affiliation to the subculture, and borrowings of words and concepts from lyrics for daily communication is clearly visible. Borrowings from English, but also vulgarisms are of particular importance here. They are the conceptual framework that is used by young people, and which at the same time becomes a symbol of social exclusion. Simultaneously, it becomes a paradigm of post-modern world.

Social unit by their appearance, behaviour, style can be embedded by other units in the area of social reality, such as rap subculture. However that does not mean the individual belongs to a social group. An individual can dress in a subcultural style, while not identifying with this group, or the opposite, identify with a subcultural group, participate in it, but do not pay attention to personal style or clothing characteristic of the subculture. Moreover, they can combine several elements characteristic of different, sometimes quite contrasting subcultures thus emphasizing their identity and individuality.

The city as a symbol of post-modernity and the experience of urban space aspires as a metaphor of reality, a maze, a struggle, a source of inspiration, and also the object of hatred. The research, both in Poland and Ukraine, have provided a lot of interesting information about the rap subculture and its individual components, also on confrontative grounds, whose common denominator is rebellion. Because it is rebellion that leads to taking action and results from the rejection of recognized standards, regulations, and any other factors that cause resistance. Undoubtedly, rebellion forces people to be active and predisposes respondents’ belonging to the rap subculture. Rebellion is inscribed in social life. In contrast, rebellious attitude stems not only from the fact of how we understand the surrounding world, but primarily from a desire to take action. For rebellion allows young people to express their views and to fight for their beliefs. It is an expression of rejecting the surrounding reality by an individual in order to search for a new order, lifestyle, the new social reality. This in turn is being done by rejecting whatever the individual disagrees with. That kind of rebellion is a lifestyle chosen by Polish and Ukrainian youth.

Rap lyrics describe and comment on the experience of their authors, who, more than often, think critically about the world around them. The lyrics themselves relate to and are

strongly associated with life in the modern world since "everything is always associated with something else, regardless of what it is". Fatalism, which dominates in the lyrics is the result of the experience of participants in the rap subculture, because "every experience is someone else's experience, the experience of some defined << I >>". This experience does not remain indifferent to the authors and participants of rap subculture, for "essential feature of the relative experience of each human being is his collective, social character. Experience of an individual is always the experience of its cooperation with other units. Personal experience is always a socio-cultural experience". And as one should recall, the same experience of participation in the rap subculture is communal by its nature. People identifying with this subculture have their own interpretation of the world. For subculture is a way of composing and expressing its own "I", which shows a very clear subcultural differentiation of fragmentary nature.

Halina Mielicka notes that "it is difficult to determine the model of an ideal man of the early twenty-first century, who represents the personal model consistent with <<post-modern>> spirit of the age" since "the identity of an individual is in fact determined not only by its social affiliation, but by its ability to take risks when creating itself. It is not social assigning, but self-determination, namely, speaking of themselves in terms of adopted personalized descriptive categories, is the essence of awareness of their own existence". Multifold subcultural identity is a characteristic feature dominant among those identifying with the rap subculture. It is the result of the search for their own individual identity, their own "I." "Variety" here is a dominant trait, since linking together the various elements, characteristics of several subcultures, in order to seek their own "I" is a very expressive feature, not uncommon in the group studied. "Awareness of one's own existence is an idiosyncratic state of knowledge about reality, which is gained through personal experiences guided by social context of meanings [...]. Social context of meanings is adopted by the individual and is an applied way to interpret and explain reality in the social environment. Its primary function is to communicate with people, exchange information, to manifest their beliefs and determine the applicable range of phenomena taken as the truth about reality". Fragmentation and a large variety in search of one’s own hyperindividuality is anchored in symbolic creativity of an individual who constantly forms its own unique identity. The search for new, blending, selecting, and the pursuit of "the new" mixes here with mirages and employing the existing subcultural assets, giving a new postmodern quality. As a result, the individual, a postmodern participant of rap subculture, both in Poland and

Ukraine, is trying to distinguish oneself from others, interpret oneself in opposition to the mainstream and, based on one's own experience, rebel against the world. Lack of approval for the reality emerges as acts of rebellion, which often comes down to aesthetic codes, symbols and signs characteristic of rap subculture. It is, however, a protest rather than rebellion since it does not involve behavioral activity, but it is verbalized by defining the status quo.

Postmodern affiliation to a subculture of rap is manifested in its fragmentation, as the largest number of people identifying with this subculture is not practicing any form of rap. However, it should be emphasized that the most common form of this subculture are graffiti, practised primarily by men in Ukrainian megapolises, and breakdance. People recognizing themselves as members of rap subculture, as it was stated above, have a passive interest in elements of rap. It should be noted, however, that persons identifying themselves with two subcultures, including rap subculture, show the most active subcultural involvement.

Appearance of a post-modern rapper does not vary much both in Poland and Ukraine. Hairstyle, cap, scarf on the head, gold teeth, a chain around the neck, loose T-shirt, hoodie, backpack, low crotch, baggy pants, and sport or leather shoes are all representative features of a rapper. What distinguishes a Polish rapper from his Ukrainian counterpart are gold and diamond teeth and a backpack.

Majority of respondents identifying themselves with rap subculture, likes different types of music. Favorite genres, apart from rap itself, are pop, disco, and classical music. None of the women listens to funk and persons in a bad financial situation do not listen to house music, funk and soul. Friends, acquaintances, rarely the Internet are the main source of information about rap. The vast majority of respondents at least once has participated in a rap concert. More than half can name their favorite rapper. People identifying with rap subculture have a multitude of sources of individual, cultural and social identity. Both their system of values and lifestyle, through participation in selected forms of subcultural activities, clothing, and accessories, are closely related to the perception of the world by such persons. Young people often identify themselves with different subcultures at the same time. Belonging to several subcultures shows multiple subcultural identities of respondents and confirms the dissertation's hypothesis.

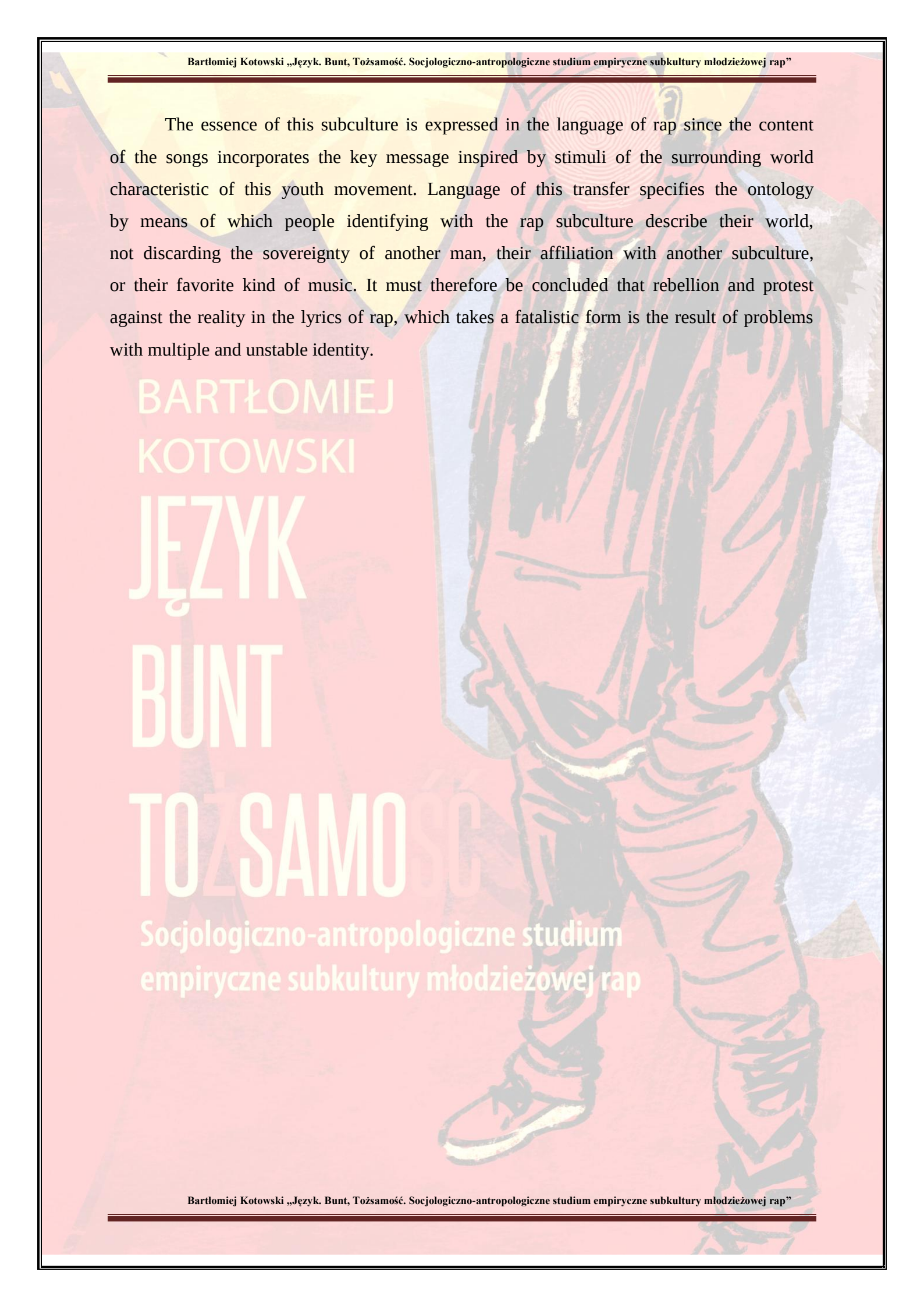
Rap jargon is rich and broadens the vocabulary of contemporary language. Adapting the subcultural lexis is closely connected with identifying oneself with a group. Thinking in terms of specific subcultural categories and interpretation of reality is not indifferent to the

individual’s life motivations and accomplishments. For the identity of the individual is emphasized by the usage of social dialect and knowledge of slang words.

Polish and Ukrainian rap lyrics are a fantastic lexical medium. Lingual expression is often enriched by vulgarization and words negatively marked. Rap lexis abounds in offensive, profane forms, negative words and phrases, loan translations, conceptual abbreviations, borrowings from foreign languages, semantic and structural borrowings, internal loanwords: from criminal and street vernaculars, from the language of drug addicts, formative and lexical neologisms, compound words, neosemanticisms, neophraseologisms, diminutive forms, interjections, conceptual abbreviations, exclamations, sayings, and addressative phrases.

The results of the research show that the vision of the world includes a desire of rebellion and protest, which for the people identifying with the rap subculture is a decisive element in terms of affiliation with the group. Lack of boundaries gives inexhaustible ability to create and use symbols and "achievements" of different subcultures. Force of otherness is seated and has strong ties not only with the lifestyle or dress code, but most of all with the context embedded in the surrounding reality, which is subject to transferring to and interpreting the conditions of the country in which rap has adapted.

Rebellious attitude is directed primarily at people and objects, rarely abstract phenomena. Strong ties with the US, where rap has originated, are visible primarily in lexical layer of both Poles and Ukrainians. Selective bilingualism is adapted to the socio-political reality and current problems of the country. To the same extent it helps to explain and imposes its own way of seeing and interpreting the real world. Interviews with respondents indicate that rap language evokes emotions and leads to reflection on the world around us. Events that trigger rebellion in the fatalistic, full of self-centeredness rap lyrics are injustice, inequality, power, lack of prospects and limitations. Defiance makes sense only if it is a group action.

The biggest problem worrying the respondents is low standard of living. However, for the Polish people unemployment, as well as hypocrisy, poverty and lack of prospects for the future are more disturbing. The Ukrainians on the other hand dread corruption, lack of prospects for the future, injustice and politicians. Key values for Poles are love, health, friendship, freedom and respect. Ukrainians cherish friendship, health, self-fulfillment, freedom and love.

The essence of this subculture is expressed in the language of rap since the content of the songs incorporates the key message inspired by stimuli of the surrounding world characteristic of this youth movement. Language of this transfer specifies the ontology by means of which people identifying with the rap subculture describe their world, not discarding the sovereignty of another man, their affiliation with another subculture, or their favorite kind of music. It must therefore be concluded that rebellion and protest against the reality in the lyrics of rap, which takes a fatalistic form is the result of problems with multiple and unstable identity.