

Patriots and Pedagogues: Cultural Institutions and the Performative Politics of Minority German Hip-Hop

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This article examines the politics of immigrant and minority German hip-hop from its emergence until today as well as its role within the cultural policies of the state. Hip-hop in Germany has both provided scripts for political and social contestation and acted as a means for the state to manage potentially “unruly” youth. Whereas early politically oriented hip-hop was divided between minoritarian ethnic and civic national forms of affiliation, in the past decade it has increasingly embraced German national symbolism from diverse political positions. We analyze these developments in the work of three contemporary artists and examine how their cultural production operates within national and transnational pedagogical contexts.

Keywords: citizenship, migration, popular culture, hip-hop, music, pedagogy, national identity, transnationalism, cultural policy

The rise of hip-hop in Germany in the 1990s coincided with fundamental legal and geopolitical changes that opened up the definition of the German body politic. These changes spanned from reunification to the limited implementation of birthright to citizenship (*jus soli*) in 2000. Hip-hop in Germany has provided a format for marginalized groups to express political and social contestation as well as a pedagogical tool for the state to manage potentially “unruly” youth. This article examines the politics of immigrant and minority German hip-hop music from its mainstream emergence in the early 1990s until today as well as its role in the cultural policies of the German state. We focus on texts and videos that perform national narration and participate in pedagogical discourses from a range of subject positions within national and transnational “citizenscapes” (Joseph, 1999). The establishment of hip-hop culture in Germany demonstrates the transnational value of the genre for both countercultural youth expression and its pedagogical value for the state. In fact, the German case reveals how intimately these two functions

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may be intertwined. In particular, these songs portray the complex political claims of subaltern artists within the evolving hegemony of the German nation-state.²

In early German hip-hop, immigrant and minority artists who embraced politics were polarized, arguing either for civic or minoritarian ethnic models of national belonging. In recent years, however, German symbolic nationalism has gained popularity in both left- and right-leaning political rap. We identify the ongoing development of hip-hop pedagogy from youth education programs to formal school curricula. As we will demonstrate, hip-hop pedagogy has been mobilized by both artists and educational institutions that use song texts to define and narrate new national ideas involving immigrants and ethnic minorities. After outlining our theoretical framework, we introduce the origins and early development of this transnational genre in Germany. We trace how cultural policies and institutions have shaped the genre's trajectory. We then analyze songs by minority artists Aziza A., Alpa Gun, and Samy Deluxe that demonstrate the development of various political stances regarding Germany and German citizenship. From proposals to promote optimism through "positive" nationalism to narratives illustrating their stymied attempts to claim the national symbolic for themselves, these artists express diverse perspectives on issues of transnational citizenship and socioeconomic inequality.

Hip-Hop as Civic Performance and Pedagogy

Analyzing German minority hip-hop from the perspective of performativity enables the comparison of diverse yet overlapping narratives of citizenship. Following Isin and Nielsen's (2008) work on "acts of citizenship," this approach focuses on the tensions and dissonances between the ideals of democracy and the limitations and failed promises of citizenship in its legal and cultural forms. We interpret hip-hop tracks and videos that engage with political issues as instances of "staged citizenship" (Joseph, 1999), which are reflexive acts that constitute citizen-subjects. Within this schema, *performativity* refers to the creativity of the specific act, which activates and, through this activation, modifies webs of relationality. In contrast, *pedagogy* refers to the meaning-making aspect of the act and its interpretation and circulation. By attending to both as they emerge within hip-hop texts, we trace the development of new formulations of German citizenship. The types of pedagogy we analyze include the theoretical discursive form outlined here as well as more applied forms related to education.

These acts are not only relevant for the citizenship claims of immigrants and minority Germans; they also support the development of new national narratives. In his now classic work on the narration of the nation, Homi Bhabha (1990) observes that migrants and transnationals who are typically considered to occupy the national periphery actually occupy a privileged position in shaping national narratives.³ In

² Germany currently lacks precise terminology relating to identifiable (by name, appearance, dress, etc.) minorities and the decedents of immigrants. The term *Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund* (people with a migration background) is used to refer to immigrants and people with at least one immigrant parent. However, not all identifiable minorities fit this definition; others, who do not carry apparent markers of alterity, may qualify but may not be socially identified as such. Here, we use *minority* and *subaltern* to refer to those who identify, or are identifiable, as nonnormative citizens regardless of migration history.

³ Here, *transnationalism* refers to people and groups who have active affiliations with multiple nations.

these narratives, Bhabha identifies a temporal duality “between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative” (p. 297). Here “the people” play a dual role as historical “objects” of a nationalist pedagogy and the “subjects” of the continual performance that constitutes national life. Whereas the first role stabilizes a continuous historical idea of the nation, the second is continually in process, destabilizing and revealing the impossibility of the fixity and essentialism claimed by national discourses.

The recursive, repetitive, and fundamentally hybrid nature of hip-hop music is particularly suited to this process of disruption and rearticulation.⁴ The cultural translation that occurs between minority and majority discourses requires the negotiation of new forms of meaning and identification and, in so doing, undermines the establishment of a single discursive authority (Bhabha, 1990). In this way, ambivalent, unclassifiable migrant and minority discourses are a crucial part of both unmaking and remaking national discourses. Thus, peripheral populations are actually the heart of national reproduction. However, as Lauren Berlant (1997) observed in the “infantile citizenship” narratives of immigration that are popular in the civic nationalism of the United States, this relationship is potentially “vampiric” (p. 198); immigrant narratives are easily appropriated to create fertile soil for the renewal of hegemonic national narratives. Hip-hop, which has built its commercial success and political potentiality on globalized notions of alterity, illuminates this ambivalent and symbolically fertile relationship between the nation-state and subaltern publics.

Commodifying the Globalized Ghetto

Hip-hop has long been characterized by the seemingly contradictory goals of defying the systemic inequality of neoliberal economics and of succeeding within that same system (Lusane, 2004). This apparent contradiction is built into the genre’s origins. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, young multiethnic artists in New York used their knowledge of popular culture to become skilled cultural producers, attracting national and international audiences with depictions of life in their isolated, postindustrial neighborhoods (Lipsitz, 1997). Hip-hop’s originary mythology centers on the idea of creative young “slum dwellers,” connected at a global level by the shared experience of marginalization under global capitalism (Lipsitz, 1997). Out of poverty and segregation, hip-hop became one of the most commercially successful forms of popular music globally.

As Adam Krims (2002) observes, the almost prerequisite origins-in-poverty narratives of hip-hop artists emerge from a key feature of capitalist social organization: a permanent, and often racialized, urban underclass. Through the “commodified image of the ghetto,” which commercial hip-hop converts into an “aesthetic libidinal object,” the music industry generates surplus value “precisely from the commodification of a lack of value” (Krims, 2002, p. 66; see also Stehle, 2012). In this way, “the fragmented ends of the economic spectrum are rolled together—without, of course, materially changing the living conditions at either end” (Krims, 2002, p. 66). Hip-hop offers a form wherein subaltern artists

⁴ Hip-hop music is built on the practice of sampling—borrowing beats, sounds, and references from other artists and popular media (see Potter, 1995; Schloss, 2014; Walser, 1995). Through recontextualization of familiar elements in new works, hip-hop exemplifies creative performativity.

can turn their experiences of hardship and social inequality into commercial success. Nevertheless, the visibility this brings to conditions of inequality does not necessarily incite action to change those conditions. While these tensions around and within hip-hop in the United States played out almost exclusively in the realm of the market, in Germany, hip-hop emerged initially in relation to pedagogical interests of the state before it became commercially viable.

The Popular Turn of Cultural Policy and the Management of Unruly Youth

In the Federal Republic of Germany,⁵ the history of hip-hop and its pedagogical deployment are closely tied to developments in cultural policy. From the mid-1960s through the 1970s, German cultural policy shifted from conservative, "high culture" elitism to embrace popular culture inspired by the participatory notion of "socioculture." Under the philosophy *Bildung für alle, Kultur für alle*⁶ sociocultural policies sought to democratize culture by cultivating popular forms at the grassroots level. As Hoyler and Mager (2005) argue, "knowledge was interpreted as an important basis for a humane and enlightened life that should be made available to everyone by the German welfare state" (p. 239). As part of extensive social reforms, cultural policies were conceived as a partial solution to economic inequality. According to one of its main proponents, Hermann Glaser, in 1976, a major component of this comprehensive policy was the establishment of

cultural sites . . . structured and organized [so] as to allow education and "culturation" to take place as a process of communication and socialization where active, spontaneous or improvisatory behavior can come into their own. Cultural topography is about the provision of "workshops for the future." (quoted in Hoyler & Mager, 2005, p. 240)

The community and youth centers at the core of this policy were established at the local level, but were organized mostly by the *Bundesvereinigung Soziokultureller Zentren* (Federal Association of Sociocultural Centers)⁷ "whose statutes lay down the common principles of artistic-creative self-determination, cultural empowerment, the integration of social and ethnic minorities and noncommercial orientation" (Hoyler & Mager, 2005, p. 240). Thus, from their very foundation, community centers aimed to educate and cultivate minority youth.

These community centers, along with schools, are particularly significant institutions for shaping the views of young citizens-in-training. Ayşe Çağlar first questioned the purely grassroots conception of German minority hip-hop in the late 1990s. Addressing institutional involvement in the integration of minorities in Germany, Çağlar (1998) writes that, "in German society, the modification and controlling of cultural differences take the form of a pedagogical project: social workers, pedagogues and teachers are

⁵ For a review of the history of hip-hop in German Democratic Republic, see Hoyler and Mager (2005).

⁶ This term roughly translates to "education for all, culture for all," and relates to the moral and philosophical discourses of the German Romantics. *Kultur* emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries to refer to the refinement of the individual, especially through education. *Bildung* refers to the education and guidance in collective values necessary to strive toward an idealized version of *Kultur*.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own.

the main actors of this task of taming 'threatening' cultural diversity" (p. 250). Community centers served distinct yet interrelated purposes: on the one hand, the education and socialization of ethnically diverse, working-class youth and, on the other, the revaluation and elevation of urban spaces by taking advantage of the vibrant yet safe creative youth cultures incubated in the community centers.

In addition to managing diversity, hip-hop was promoted as a solution to nativist extremism among German youth. In response to the post-reunification explosion of antifoigner attacks throughout Germany, hip-hop became the primary mechanism for agencies working with young people to channel potentially violent youth energy into creative endeavors. "Various state institutions made concerted efforts to 'educate' youths (of the migrant, anti-fascist, neonazi [*sic*], and street persuasion) and promoted hiphop as a comprehensive solution to the 'problem' of youth violence" (Soysal, 2004, pp. 68-69). The practices of hip-hop pedagogy established in this period continue to play a major role in private and public youth programs (see Menrath, 2001), and many of the rappers who trained there, including Kool Savas and Harris, have gone on to reach national audiences and markets.

State-run media also actively contributed to disseminating hip-hop as a form of youth expression. In the 1980s, public broadcast media and film were principle channels for the introduction of hip-hop culture.⁸ The films *Beat Street* and *Wild Style*—the latter of which was cofunded by a West German public broadcasting company—introduced rap, dub, break dancing, and graffiti to the German public. In general, hip-hop music did not attain mainstream popularity in the 1980s (Pennay, 2002). While most dismissed the commercial breakthrough of hip-hop music as another "disco novelty," the fact that the scene was already dominated by male immigrant youth was overlooked (Elflein, 1998). Even as few acknowledged the political potential of hip-hop in the 1980s, the aforementioned films resonated strongly with a subset of youth in Germany, triggering the "revelation that hip-hop was more than rap music, it was a vivid street culture of marginalized Afro- and Hispanic-American youth" (Elflein, 1998, p. 256). With this realization, the seeds of a small, dedicated subculture were sown in the community centers of the Federal Republic, which fostered the so-called old school of German hip-hop artists.

Thus, the public youth sector supported by sociocultural policies fundamentally determined the direction and success of the West German hip-hop scene from the start. Perhaps the clearest example of the relationship between the state and minority youth mediated by hip-hop is the case of Berlin's quintessential immigrant neighborhood, Kreuzberg. As Soysal (2004) notes, in state and media narratives, Kreuzberg is both the site of an exciting new cosmopolitanism and of potentially threatening cultural difference. Although not limited to this role, hip-hop provides a means to convert this alterity into a commodity form that can be sold either directly by artists and their labels or indirectly through the subcultural cache it can bestow on neighborhoods and cities. This issue is particularly relevant given the emphasis on hip-hop in state institutions supporting subaltern youth. Derek Pardue (2007), who examines a similar utilization of hip-hop as pedagogy by the Brazilian state, argues that hip-hop helps to produce "normal" states through everyday popular activity and imagination. He then asks whether "hip-hop, as part of a more general phenomenon of 'popular education,' contributes to a hegemonic formation with

⁸ U.S. soldiers stationed in Germany also strongly influenced the German hip-hop scene (see Bennett, 2004; Pennay, 2002).

regard to citizenship or do state-employed hip-hoppers transform or expand conventional notions of citizenship in their workshops" (p. 676). This question of how hip-hop challenges or supports normalized notions of citizenship motivates our readings of tracks and music videos and their pedagogical impulses.

Citizenship and (Trans)national Stances in Early German Hip-Hop

Since reunification, debates on the definition and future of Germany "as a country of Germans" have been a consistent issue in politics and the public sphere (see Cooper, 2012). The 1990s opened with a resurgence of national sentiment justified by the perceived need to create a new national feeling to heal the divided nation (Geisler, 2005). Changes liberalizing citizenship laws in the 1990s also contributed to contentious debates and extended self-reflection on the social meanings of German citizenship. In the same period, occurrences of racist violence radically increased, including multiday riots destroying asylum seekers' hostels in Hoyerswerda and in Rostock and lethal arson attacks on Turkish families in Solingen and Mölln between 1991 and 1993.

In reaction to this outbreak of racist violence, Advanced Chemistry, whose members were German citizens of Italian, Ghanaian, and Haitian heritage, used hip-hop to critique the construction of minorities as permanent foreigners. They were among the first to abandon English texts to rap in German. The group forcefully asserted a rights-based notion of national belonging, highlighting the ethnicist undercurrents of everyday discourse in Germany and connecting them to the racist attacks of the early 1990s, thus demonstrating the disparity between their legal status as citizens and their exclusionary treatment by ethnic Germans. With lyrics that became a frequent point of reference for the next generation of rappers, they focus on laws and citizenship, representing a kind of "constitutional patriotism" (Müller, 2008) focused on democratic rights and responsibilities.

Although they have been extremely influential, according to Andy Bennett (2004), groups like Advanced Chemistry were continually critiqued by many in the immigrant community "for their failure to acknowledge any form of ethnic identification other than that symbolized by their German passports, a failure that was perceived to amount to a symbolic betrayal of the right of ethnic minorities to 'roots'" (p. 184). In contrast to Advanced Chemistry's civic national stance, other immigrant groups promoted a form of ethnically oriented minoritarian resistance. Cartel, the most prominent example of this stance, was a collaborative project consisting primarily of German Turks from across Germany and rapping mostly in Turkish. Although their messages are firmly situated within the cultural context of living as migrants in Germany, their stance is closer to ethnic nationalism than the civic integrationist claims of Advanced Chemistry.

While Cartel's stance emphasized the discreteness of ethnic and cultural groups, they also maintained a claim to equal recognition as a constituent and permanent part of German society (Tüccar, 2011). Still, this emphasis on Turkish self-identification allowed for what Alev Çınar (1999) calls a "convenient (mis)reading" in the German public sphere in which Cartel's music was interpreted "as an expression of allegiance to the 'newly found homeland,' Turkey" (p. 44). This confirmed the already-held perception of the "Turk" as a permanent foreigner who is "thus unable to become part of Germany" (Çınar, 1999, p. 44; see also Soysal, 2004). By the turn of the millennium, however, minority hip-hop

largely abandoned the ethnic nationalism underlying Cartel's strong multiculturalist model, favoring instead a range of symbolic and civic models of nationalism and public engagement.

New Citizen Performances: Aziza A., Alpa Gun, Samy Deluxe

Just as Cartel and Advanced Chemistry claimed the role of spokesperson for their communities, within contemporary hip-hop, several artists have taken a pedagogical stance in order to put forth a "lesson plan" that purports to challenge state-run educational institutions. Alpa Gun and Samy Deluxe explicitly take on the role of teachers to educate citizens across ethnic lines on the meaning of civic nationalist belonging from two distinct political positionalities. In contrast, Aziza A. rejects the role of minority pedagogue, but her texts nevertheless contribute to culturalist narratives that have been mobilized in national and international education about the "problems" of German multiculturalism. Our analysis focuses on what Henry Giroux (2000) calls the crucial problem in analyzing cultural texts—that is, "how culture as a terrain of struggle functions pedagogically to shape the possibilities of political agency and critical engagement within dominant cultural and institutional forms" (p. 350). Elaborating and moving beyond the minoritarian ethnic nationalism of Cartel and the critical and legalistic focus of Advanced Chemistry's constitutional patriotism, these artists perform a range of new civic positionalities and affiliative politics.

Identity Politics Cross Borders: Aziza A. in the Classroom

Unlike Alpa Gun and Samy Deluxe, whose careers began later, hip-hop artist Aziza A. explicitly rejects the pedagogical role of transcultural ambassador. She stated in an interview in 1999 that she is not concerned with being a role model for other young Turkish German women (Lützow, 2007). She went on to reject the stereotype of the supposedly conflicted bicultural upbringing:

I believe that I and many other Turks are a lot further along on the German-Turkish thing. For me, it is no longer a question of how much of me is Turkish. We live here in Berlin, and I'm a Berliner: it's that simple! (Lützow, 2007, p. 456)

Defining oneself through allegiance with the birth city, and even neighborhood, as a supplement to, or substitution for, the parents' country of origin is common among youth of migrant heritage (see. e.g., Römhild, 2004). Aziza A.'s views reflect the mission statement of Kanak Attak, an activist organization founded by Feridun Zaimoglu in 1998 of which she was a member; the group's name reclaims the pejorative *Kanake* and declares its fight against racism and ethnocentrism in German society. The group's manifesto declares that it is "not interested in questions about passport or heritage, in fact it challenges such questions in the first place. . . . [It] rejects every single form of identity politics" (as cited in von Dirke, 2007, p. 105). In a media atmosphere in which questions of identity, rather than consideration of aesthetics, dominate the discourse surrounding minority cultural production (Dayioğlu-Yücel, 2012), these artists aim to emancipate themselves from this reductionist discourse.

However, rejecting identity politics does not by itself eliminate identity politics, nor is it an ideologically neutral move. Aziza A.'s lyrics resonate through her social positionality and inevitably

represent her views to the wider German public. Her 1997 debut single "Es ist Zeit" (It's time) (see Figure 1), demands scrutiny of cultural practices in Turkish German communities that limit the potential of women and girls. Despite Aziza A.'s rejection of identity politics, in this song she performs the role of a Turkish insider critiquing her own community, but she does so for a German-dominant public. Although Aziza A.'s music often includes some German, most of her songs are primarily in Turkish. In contrast, her decision to rap entirely in German on this track with only minimal Turkish elements raises questions about whether the Turkish subjects she addresses are actually the target audience of her song. The song opens up a comfortable space for normative Germans to feel as though they are participating in a grassroots effort to improve the lives of immigrant and minority German women while merely reaffirming the hegemonic discourses that position immigrant and Muslim women as victims of patriarchal oppression. While Aziza A.'s message may have been critiqued as Orientalist had it come from a conservative politician, coming from an "authentic insider," the message is uncontroversial. For the mainstream German consumer, these types of cultural production, albeit unintentionally, offer a politically flaccid exoticism.

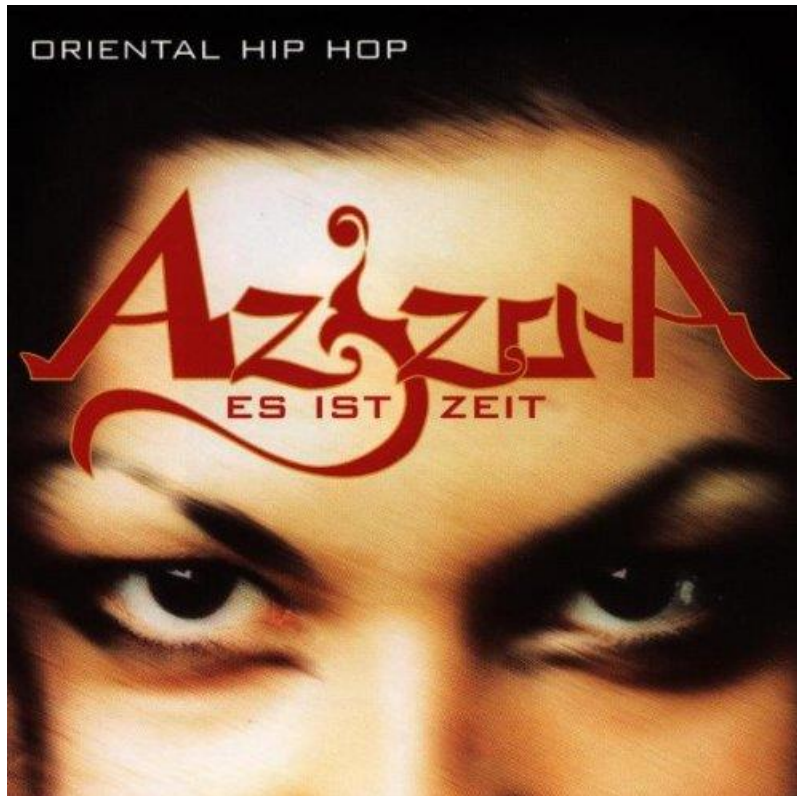


Figure 1. The album cover for *Es ist Zeit* (Aziza A., 1997) reproduces Orientalist tropes of exotic and mysterious femininity.

The implications of this portrayal in terms of representational politics multiply when brought into a different context: the intermediate-level German language and culture textbook *Anders gedacht: Text and Context in the German-Speaking World* (Motyl-Mudretzkyj & Späinghaus, 2014), widely used in North American secondary and university classrooms. To encourage student engagement, it uses realia, including both canonical and popular cultural materials. In unit 3, "Multicultural Life: Melting Pot or Multicultural Society?" Aziza A.'s song "Es ist Zeit" is presented in a section subtitled "Deutschsein und Fremdsein" (Germanness and Foreignness). This subtitle simultaneously presents parallelism and oppositionality between these two identificatory categories that makes them mutually exclusive. Germanness is thus portrayed as a finite entity that cannot accommodate foreignness within it. A brief artist biography presents her as the first female German Turkish rapper, a distinction that relies on the intersection of her ethnic and gender identities, and as the creator of "Oriental Hip-Hop," a genre that combines traditional elements of Turkish music with hip-hop styles.

The first activity is a discussion on the connotations of the words *fremd*, *Integration*, and *Assimilation* (foreign, integration, assimilation). Then students are asked to consider "what problems people have when they live in a culture different from the one into which they were born" (Motyl-Mudretzkyj & Späinghaus, 2014, p. 110). Because "problems" are the entry point here, students are primed to think about Aziza A.'s text as presenting the negative aspects of a multicultural upbringing rather than its potential benefits. The phrasing perpetuates an either-or sense of identity affiliation rather than one that allows for both-and. This depiction is consistent with the *zwischen den Stühlen* (lit. between the chairs) trope popular in the German media in the 1990s and beyond, which portrayed migrant youth as being caught between two cultures and incapable of successfully integrating into either one (Riegel & Geisen, 2010).

Next, students engage with the text by listening to the song and filling in missing words, provided in a box adjacent to the lyrics. The words left out imply negative associations with multiculturalism, and particularly with maintaining a Muslim identity in the Western world; words such as *schweigsam* (silent), *Angst* (fear), and *Pflicht* (duty) defining the expectations of Muslim womanhood contrast with *Freiheit* (freedom), *richtig* (correct), and *selbstständig* (independent), which represent the benefits of successful assimilation into the German cultural model. The word *Unterschied* (difference) is to be filled in twice, underscoring just how irreconcilable the two cultures purportedly are. This introduction to minority cultural production emphasizes the (female) migrant artist's alterity, oppression, and disempowerment. In this framework, immigration in Germany remains a problem to be solved rather than a value added.

Although Aziza A. may reject the role of minority representative, her only hit single is a foray straight into the heart of German cultural politics, which are laden with anxieties about the patriarchal inclinations of Muslim minorities. The outsized commercial success of "Es ist Zeit" as compared to her other music to date emphasizes the rewards of engaging in identity politics that conform to majority expectations. This song's use in international German textbooks nearly 20 years after its release attests to its pedagogical appeal for educators representing minority and immigrant issues in an increasingly diverse Germany. Despite her explicit antipedagogical stance, Aziza A.'s work is easily appropriated for

educational purposes, celebrating transnational artists while also reinforcing racialized binaries dividing “traditional” Muslim minority cultures from “modern” European values.

A Foreign Patriot: Alpa Gun’s Civic Responsibility

Although *Kanak Attak*-affiliated artists such as Aziza A. claim to reject a pedagogical role, education has emerged as an important theme in more recent work by some immigrant and minority German rappers. However, not all hip-hop pedagogy is easily appropriable for mainstream educational purposes. Berlin-based rapper Alpa Gun’s lyrics thematize confronting and overcoming the inequalities of the German economic and social systems. Since his 2007 debut, his songs have run the gamut from self-glorifying “diss tracks” to far-reaching critiques of Western aggression and global capitalism. Alpa Gun’s first albums were released with the label Sektenmusik, successor to Germany’s first mainstream gangsta rap label, Aggro Berlin. Gangsta rap, which depends on personal narratives of violence in racially segregated urban spaces for authenticity, has been maligned since it took over mainstream rap music in the United States in the 1990s (Morgan, 2013; Tate, 2015). Although Alpa Gun often indulges in notorious gangsta rap tropes—including building his credibility through his drug-dealing past, references to weapons, and hypermasculinity—his tracks also condemn war and violence and consistently focus on structural, political, and social inequality.

In Alpa Gun’s song “Patriot,” he questions the state’s primary tool of instruction: schools. He raps, “Ich wurde gut erzogen, doch war nie im Unterricht / Doch jetzt bin ich ein Demonstrant und kämpfe für die Unterschicht” (I was well educated, but was never in class. / And now I’m a protestor and fight for the lower class) (Alpa Gun, 2008). He extends this critique in the title track off of his album *Geboren um zu sterben* (Born to die) (2014), in which he implicates the education system in the cultivation of quiescence. He sees it as the first step on a fixed path from the “cradle to the grave” regulated by those in power, which discourages development of self-knowledge and critical action.

Particularly in Alpa Gun’s early work, the question of national and class affiliation plays a prominent role in his formulation of a politics of protest. He defines his own success in terms of his ability to serve as a role model for the dispossessed. Recognizing that his success as a rapper is elevating him “nach oben” (upward) into a higher social class, he declares solidarity with his “Volk” (people), a term that is highly ethnicized in German in that it emphasizes the idea of an organic, primordial community. However, here it refers to no particular ethnic or religious community, but rather to all subaltern people, and especially to the transnational inhabitants of the “ghetto.” He also acknowledges the limits of his music, rapping that “das ist ein bisschen Politik, doch ich spiel’ nicht den Helden. / Vielleicht kann ich ein paar von euch mit meiner Mukke helfen” (this is just a little politics, I am not playing the hero. / Maybe I can help a few of you with my gig) (Alpa Gun, 2008). Alpa Gun’s performance thus defines the patriot not as one who unwaveringly supports the nation-state, but rather as one who brings awareness to and fights against the injustices it perpetuates.

Alpa Gun often appropriates national terms and symbols, but he mobilizes them in provocative ways. He frequently mixes Turkish and German symbols, including wearing clothing with the star and crescent moon of the Turkish flag superimposed onto the German flag. In his song “Sor bir bana” (2010b)

(Turkish, figuratively, "Tell me about it") featuring Sido, the German national Sido raps in Turkish while Alpa Gun, who is a German-born Turkish national, raps primarily in German. The video opens with close-up shots of Sido playing backgammon and drinking tea out of a traditional Turkish glass, punctuated with quick cuts to shots of apartment building façades and playgrounds and of men working and panhandling on the streets. Next, it cuts to Sido in a red shirt with a Turkish flag patch, rapping next to Alpa Gun in front of an oversized German flag (see Figure 2), interspersed with wider shots of people moving along and working in Kreuzberg's streets.

Sido's use of these symbolic props on the linguistic and spatial turf of Turks in Berlin challenges a one-way notion of integration as well as essentialist conceptions of culture and nation. His ability to perform "Turkishness" also enhances Sido's subcultural credibility in a genre that associates authenticity with minority status (Stehle, 2012). Although an advanced Turkish speaker will notice his nonnative inflection, Sido's performance bears no trace of camp or kitsch. The prominently featured German flag is juxtaposed in the video with the fundamentally transnational space of Kreuzberg. Alpa Gun's narration of the nation undermines any possibility of stability, emphasizing the fluidity of identification and enacting a transnational claim to citizenship, even for those like him who were born in Germany but remain foreign (nationals).



Figure 2. Sido (left) backs up Alpa Gun in front of a German flag in the "Sor bir bana" video (Alpa Gun, 2010a).

As he narrates in "Patriot" how "the streets" were his classroom, Alpa Gun also presents alternative classrooms in his music videos for the songs "Sor bir bana" and "Ausländer" (Foreigner). Both videos utilize school-like spaces as their settings and feature children. Much of "Sor bir bana" uses a

playground as a backdrop, featuring children playing and break-dancing (see Figure 3). Similarly, some of the first images in the video for "Ausländer" are of boys and girls. In each case, their dark hair and eyes signify their "migration background"; in hip-hop texts and in popular discourse, black hair stands in as a signifier of ethnic difference, distinguishing minorities from the stereotypically blond Germans. Later, four boys are presented, coinciding with the beat of Alpa Gun's lyric referencing Advanced Chemistry, "Fast jeder auf der Straße hat 'nen deutschen Pass" (Almost everyone on the streets has a German passport) (Alpa Gun, 2007).



Figure 3. Sido (left) and Alpa Gun perform from a Kreuzberg playground (Alpa Gun, 2010a).

With the juxtaposition of these lyrics and images, Alpa Gun emphasizes that young immigrants and minority Germans are legitimate members of German society. Demanding access to the seat of politics, Alpa Gun references the frieze dedicating the German Reichstag building "Dem deutschen Volke" (To the German people), declaring "Ihr sollt nur wissen, wir sind auch ein Teil vom deutschen Volk" (You [plural] should just know, we too are part of the German people) (Alpa Gun, 2007). In both videos and lyrics, his performance is aimed both up at normative German society addressed as his interlocutor, and out and down to the young people flanking him in the video. Alpa Gun acts as a spokesperson, following an organic intellectual model (Hoare & Smith, 1971), and, considering the juxtaposition of his spokesman-status and the use of school-like spaces, a teacher.

Patriotic Pluralism and the German Past: The Case of Samy Deluxe

Another artist who embraces the role of activist-educator is Afro-German rapper Samy Deluxe. Like Alpa Gun, Samy Deluxe embraces the role of pedagogue and situates his work within national

discursive battles over the definitions and futures of German society. However, though early in his career Samy Deluxe was involved with the antiracist hip-hop collective Brother's Keepers (see Stehle, 2012), his work has since taken a conservative turn. Samy Deluxe's recent work promotes the neoliberal ethics of individualism, productivity, and freedom from government interference, ignoring issues of culturalist racism. Whereas Alpa Gun deconstructs the gap between promises of equality and realities of structural and everyday racist exclusion,⁹ Samy Deluxe condemns critical national self-reflection for undermining the pride supposedly necessary for national productivity. Like Aziza A.'s work, Samy Deluxe's texts are also easily mobilized for mainstream education. Unlike Aziza A., however, Samy Deluxe has explicitly positioned himself as an "ambassador" who is able to speak to Germany's increasingly diverse youth to deliver a plea for national pride.

In the title track from his 2009 album, *Dis wo ich herkomm* (Dis where I come from), Samy Deluxe presents two intertwined themes regarding the national future. In the first theme, Samy Deluxe frames his work as public pedagogy, arguing for the importance of the youngest generation for Germany's future. The second is an apologetic call for Germany to forgive itself for its past crimes and encourage a renewed sense of national pride justified by the increasing diversity of Germany's population. This national pride is framed as necessary to give German youth hope for their future. Taken together, these two themes advocate for a new Germany separated from the memory of National Socialism, driven by national pride toward a productive future.

Regarding the first theme, the song's lyrics include a strong pedagogical impetus, underscoring how the artist views his own work in the community. In each of the three verses, he reflects on his experiences with children. In the first verse, he says,

ich werd' beweisen, dass ich mehr für Deutschland mach' als der Staat
mit meinen Partnern, denn wir geben den Kids Perspektive,
bisschen Aufmerksamkeit und ein bisschen mehr Liebe
(I'm going to prove that I do more for Germany than the state
because my partners and I give kids perspective,
a little attention, and a little more love). (Samy Deluxe, 2009b)

Samy Deluxe, like Alpa Gun, claims that his efforts helping children are more productive than the state's. He criticizes the government for failing to support the nation, which here is not the state, nor is it "the people" in either a civic or ethnic sense. Instead, the nation is a symbolic resource that needs to be supported by the people and in turn serves as a source of the self. Unlike Alpa Gun, whose critique of the state promotes a grassroots approach to politics, by referencing his "partners" from his nonprofit Crossover e.V., Samy Deluxe turns instead to the privatized model of nonprofit organizations. Combining this with his claim from another song on the same album that, "würdet Ihr Politiker hier wirklich mal an Deutschland denken, würdet Ihr als allererstes die verdammten Steuern senken" (If you politicians would only just think about Germany, then the first thing you would do is lower the damn taxes) (2009d), Samy

⁹ See, for example, "Wer bin ich?" (Who am I?) (Alpa Gun, 2010c).

Deluxe supports neoliberal politics that would reduce the role of government in public affairs. Indeed, with its high taxes and poor returns, he frames the government as a key source of Germany's problems.

Samy Deluxe clearly relishes assuming the role of community educator, providing a "more useful" set of lessons centered on what he calls "eine neue Perspektive auf die ganze Scheiße" (a new perspective on all this shit), consisting primarily of renewed civic optimism and pride (see Figure 4). The first verse opens with his call to arms, a claim that "wir müssen mehr für unser Land tun, für unser Ego / Dies ist der Startschuss für die Kampagne" (we have to do more for our country, for our ego / This is the starting shot of the campaign). He links supporting the nation to self-actualization. In the second verse, Samy Deluxe reinforces the claims made earlier:

ich will lieber etwas tun,
 deshalb red' ich mit den Kids an den Schulen,
 denn ich glaub' immer noch an die Jugend und weiß,
 sie sind die Zukunft und brauchen bloß bisschen Hoffnung
 (I would rather do something,
 that's why I talk to kids at schools,
 because I still believe in the youth and know
 they are our future and just need a little hope). (2009b)

Not only does he claim to deliver a message different from state-approved messages for youth, he does so within the educational space of the state itself (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Samy Deluxe in the classroom "Dis wo ich herkomm" video (Samy Deluxe, 2009c).

Samy Deluxe argues that public schools are not teaching students the optimism required to build the nation's future. Whereas Alpa Gun is concerned with educational institutions that pacify young people, preparing them to be exploited by an unjust economic and political system, Samy Deluxe argues that the critical lessons taught in schools depress students, burdening them unfairly and stunting their growth. However, in relation to other well-established political stances, Samy Deluxe's civic lesson is not actually "new." As we detail below, the idea that there exists a pervasive and psychically corrosive pessimism resulting from the memory of national atrocities is well established in the German public sphere.

Samy Deluxe emphasizes the inclusivity of Germany today and uses this new diversity to justify curtailing continuing discussions of Germany's past. Furthermore, he builds his pedagogical authority to deliver this message on the basis of his own formerly negative attitude toward Germany, which he has since reformed: "Ich wollte selbst schon weg von hier, Mann" (I wanted to get out of here myself, man), he raps. Without detailing the causes of his discontent, he goes on to say, "Ich habe dieses Land hier fast mein ganzes Leben gehasst" (I hated this country almost my entire life). But then he realized his civic duty and declared loyalty to Germany as his true home. He declares, "Ich bin ein deutscher Mann, so steht's in meinem Pass" (I am a German man. That's what my passport says) (2009b) in another reference to *Advanced Chemistry* (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Samy Deluxe shows his passport (Samy Deluxe, 2009c).

Rejecting the leftist idea that critical stances toward nationalism and the German past can contribute to stronger democratic institutions, Samy Deluxe suggests that reflecting on the past functions to unfairly shame Germans, harming Germany's progress as a nation. In a line that sparked some critical response in the press, he goes so far as suggest that it is unfair that Germans "have no national pride . . .

all on account of Adolf," who was an Austrian, not a German, thus implying that Hitler should not figure so strongly in conceptualizations of German identity. Complaining that "die Nazizeit hat unsere Zukunft versaut" (the Nazi period ruined our future), Samy Deluxe problematically asserts that the emphasis on Germany's past is causing national malaise:

Wir haben beide Weltkriege gestartet . . . aber was sollen wir tun?
 Etwa für immer depressiv sein
 trotz den ganzen Fortschritten der kulturellen Vielfalt?
 Nein, ich finde nicht.
 (We started both World Wars . . . but what are we supposed to do?
 Be depressed forever
 despite all the progress of cultural diversity?
 No, I don't think so.)

The purported emotional harm inflicted by continuing concern with the past motivates him to speak with schoolchildren to give them hope and show them that "when you look more closely, Germany is already totally alright" (Samy Deluxe, 2009b). The song uses today's trope of cultural diversity to argue that the institutionalized racism of the past is no longer relevant for understanding the present or future.

This position fits within the apologist framework advocated by conservative intellectuals during the *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute) of the 1980s (see Maier, 1997). Although on its face this public debate was over the interpretation of the past, the urgency of the debate was less about the Holocaust than about constructing a vision of the past on which to build a new nationalism (Torpey, 1988). One of the driving arguments in this debate was that the purportedly exceptional period of the Third Reich had taken over German self-conception, making a positive national identity impossible. Conservative re-readings of National Socialism were thus aimed at constructing a "usable past" on which to build a self-confident Germany. Samy Deluxe's arguments here demonstrate that the apologist drive for a "usable past" is still active more than two decades later.

For Samy Deluxe, Holocaust memory functions as an impediment to an effective national pedagogy based on optimism and pride. The question of what lessons the past may hold for understanding the function and stakes of everyday racism today has no place in Samy Deluxe's politics. Whereas scholars such as Andreas Huyssen (2003) and Rothberg and Yildiz (2011) analyze the productive encounters possible at the intersections of the histories of ancestral and new homelands, Samy Deluxe's approach uses the concept of Germany as a land of migration to cancel out contentious pasts. His status as a visible minority allows him to express positions that would be more obviously problematic coming from a White German. He thus fulfills the role of infantile citizen (Berlant, 1997), teaching both Germans and immigrant youth how to enact a new form of national pride based on a cosmopolitan Germany. In his insistence on optimism and his use of increasing diversity as proof of social progress, Samy Deluxe also contributes to discourses that whitewash racism and obscure the structural foundations of inequality.

The pedagogical affordances of Samy Deluxe's music were developed through public-private partnerships in productions for print and screen, including a television documentary miniseries for public-

service broadcaster ZDF,¹⁰ an autobiography, and a German secondary school textbook written as a companion to his autobiography. In 2011, in the wake of these projects, Samy Deluxe was named the *Bildungsbotschafter* (education ambassador) for Europe's largest education trade show, Didacta. These spin-offs were designed for young people in the German school system to help develop their own "Hip-hop Lexicon" and explore lessons such as Germany's "Timeline: From Racism to Integration" (Rohr, 2010). Within the framework of his music, the textbook includes nation-building assignments, such as the creation of a survey to determine the "top ten German character traits." The nationalist orientation of Samy Deluxe's pedagogy emphasizes the importance of pride, a framework that casts critique as an identity threat. In Samy Deluxe's work, the addition of more "color" (2009a) to German society redeems the nation from its past sins and mistakenly presumes the elimination of racism from German society.

Conclusion

In the wake of citizenship law changes, national and citizenship claims in minority German hip-hop have become increasingly complex. The staunch minoritarian ethnic nationalism of Cartel has largely dissipated in the mainstream, replaced by more complex forms of transnational affiliation. At the same time, many minority artists, including Alpa Gun, Manuelsen, and Bushido, have engaged with the critical German civic nationalism of Advanced Chemistry; others, including Samy Deluxe and Harris, have favored affective and symbolic nationalism. This follows a broader German trend toward embracing symbolic nationalism epitomized by the "soccer patriotism" of the World Cup (Majer-O'Sickey, 2006; Stehle & Weber, 2013). Since the turn of the millennium, German minority hip-hop has developed to include a wide range of political claims, with some artists, such as Alpa Gun and Samy Deluxe, taking on active and activist roles (Isin & Nielsen, 2008), while others, such as Aziza A., speak out to reject the burdens of representation heaped on minority artists. However, an artist's identity politics are often not just a matter of personal preference but are inevitably involved in a contextually bound public performance.

While hip-hop remains an important outlet for expressing frustrations with state failures to address persistent economic and social inequality, even tracks expressing these social critiques frequently include conventional symbolic-nationalist gestures and even explicit rejections of the kinds of postconventional identities long advocated by the German left (Müller, 2008; Torpey, 1988). Increasingly, immigrant and minority hip-hop artists lean on the stability and unifying power of German national symbols, even if their performances undo the imaginary of the nation as a stable totality. Claiming German symbolism for themselves is a challenge to deep-seated ethnic norms of Germanness. It is a means for multiethnic and transnational Germans to change the nation by staking a claim to it.

However, it would be wrong to assume that these changes are necessarily antihegemonic. As we have demonstrated, Samy Deluxe's life and work are used to claim that Germany has moved beyond racism, and Aziza A.'s denunciations of patriarchal oppression become part of curriculums separating the "silence" and "fear" in supposedly unintegrated Muslim communities from the "independence" and "freedom" possible through integration. Minority status appears to work as a sort of camouflage for artists embracing strong nationalist and xenophobic positions.

¹⁰ See <https://youtu.be/6WVnVxnX1lw>

One very clear example of this was the selection of Afro-German rapper Harris' song lambasting allegedly recalcitrant immigrants as the theme song for a government-sponsored "integration campaign" in 2010. The song dismisses racist acts as merely fleeting and superficial ("just the blink of an eye") while indicting immigrants who criticize Germany (Harris, 2010). Harris acknowledges in the song that his words would brand him as a Nazi if he had blue eyes and blond hair. This recognition does not make him reflect on the xenophobic implications of his claims. Instead, he uses it to cast doubt on those who raise concerns about xenophobia. Harris positions himself as a "teller of hard truths" while implying that his status as a Black German proves that he is incapable of racism. The government's selection of this song as part of a media campaign to encourage integration suggests more than a lapse in judgment; it suggests an ironically racialized inability or unwillingness to critically assess texts by minority artists when they align with neoliberal imperatives to privatize experiences of racism and promote a myth of postracialism (Lentin & Titley, 2011).

German public institutions have strongly supported hip-hop since the 1980s, using it to manage potentially unruly youth and channel frustration in ostensibly productive directions. Institutional support of hip-hop can thus be read as part of a larger pedagogical project, supported by the state, to provide a safe and purportedly mutually beneficial way to work through the perceived problems of immigrant and minority German youth. Germany, meanwhile, benefits both politically and economically from marketing itself as an increasingly open society; the cultural products of artists of migrant heritage are utilized in both domestic and international discourses that obscure the persistence of racialized inequality and present a new, "colorful" face of Germany for the 21st century.

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