



Immigrant Youth, Hip Hop, and Online Games: Alternative Approaches to the Inclusion of Working-Class and Second Generation Migrant Teens

Barbara Franz

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Anti-Muslim racism with its attendant xenophobia and (the fear of) Salafist hostility are two of the most essential problems facing Europe today. Both result from the enormous failure of the continent's integration policies, which have either insisted on immigrants' rigid assimilation or left immigrants to fend for themselves. This book radically breaks with contemporary approaches to immigrant assimilation and integration. Instead it examines non-institutional approaches that facilitate immigrant inclusion through the examples of three alternative small-scale projects that have impacted the lives of urban working-class youth, specifically with second-generation immigrant roots, in Vienna, Austria. These projects involve online gaming, hip hop as an art form, and social work as emancipatory pedagogic practice (commonly referred to as street work). After exploring historic and structural conditions of marginalization in Austria, the book investigates working-class teenagers' social networks and describes an online game designed to provide a platform for interaction between non-immigrant and immigrant youth who usually either do not interact or display prejudice when they engage each other. Hip hop can provide both a necessary outlet for alienated youth to articulate their frustrations and a highly effective tool for transforming inclusion conflicts. This is achieved through offering individual teens the necessary means to gain the resilience and social grounding necessary to help overcome exclusion and marginalization. In addition to the individual young person's agency, the inclusion process, of course, also requires corresponding efforts by the majority society. Social work with marginalized youth is crucial for successful inclusion. Specifically individual support in small-scale settings provides a unique opportunity to open up spaces for discouraged and disaffected teenagers to gain self-worth and dignity. While the book focuses on identity formation and the teenagers' agency, it argues that only projects that include both "newcomer" and "native" can aid in overcoming exclusionary attitudes and policies, eventually allowing some form of social bonding to take place.

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