The Representation of Gangsta Rap in Music Education Textbooks

Charlotte Furtwängler

Abstract *While gangsta rap is especially popular among young people, in pedagogical discourses it is met with considerable skepticism. This essay thus examines all current textbooks for music lessons for seventh and eighth grades in Germany to ask whether and how the topic of "gangsta rap" is being engaged. Two conclusions can be drawn. First, only several textbooks for schools address the topic. And second, those that do engage with gangsta rap attempt to avoid its problematic aspects by presenting the subgenre in certain ways. These avoidance strategies are analyzed in more detail below. The goal of this chapter is to show how the subgenre of gangsta rap and the pedagogical challenges it poses are currently being addressed in school teaching materials, thereby providing insights into a significantly underresearched area of music pedagogy.*

Introduction

Gangsta rap is currently the most popular subgenre of rap music in Germany (Seeliger 2021: 34; Uschmann/Kleiner 2022: 26). Especially for young people, the songs, videos, and images that artists present of themselves articulate significant experiences, wishes, fears, and ways of seeing the world. Gangsta rap therefore fulfills meaningful and identity-forming functions (Seeliger/Dietrich 2017: 9; Straub 2012: 8). At the same time, the controversial visual worlds, narratives, and staging methods of gangsta rappers often break with social conventions of the dominant culture (Uschmann/Kleiner 2022: 26).

Empirical research is still scarce on how Hip-Hop in general and (gangsta) rap in particular are used in music education (Kruse 2020a: 498). Nevertheless, we can say that music education, which accordingly to many current pedagogical models should aim to include students' lifeworlds (see Pfeiffer 2013; Rolle

2013), faces a challenge and dilemma. Music teachers are expected to give Hip-Hop, and particularly (gangsta) rap, a place in music education, as it is a significant part of students' lifeworlds. And yet many strongly criticize the subgenre of gangsta rap for content that is sexist, antisemitic, or queerphobic, or that glorifies violence (Sator 2017: 22), leading to skepticism or rejection in the context of music education (see Viertal 2021: 12; Heß 2018: 48–50). This raises the question of how music education practices related to Hip-Hop deal with this dilemma. One way of answering this question is to analyze current music education materials that address gangsta rap, and in this context examining textbooks for music education is particularly useful. This is because music textbooks not only reflect current ideas in music education but also serve as guides and sources of material for music teachers, thus having a "significant influence on how teaching is conducted" (Heß 2016: 183; see also Jünger 2006: 236; Rogg 2017: 71; Fuchs et al. 2014: 11).

In this chapter, I first present current discourses on pedagogical approaches to using gangsta rap in the classroom. I then examine two textbook chapters dedicated to the topic of gangsta rap. These chapters are taken from a complete corpus of all music textbooks approved for seventh and eighth grades in Germany by the state ministries of education (as of 2022). Of these, only three chapters explicitly address the topic of gangsta rap.[1] My analysis will show that the textbook chapters use specific strategies to circumvent the pedagogical challenges that arise in discussing gangsta rap in schools. My findings provide initial indications of what educational publications recommend as best practice for pedagogical engagement with gangsta rap.

Gangsta Rap: Challenges for Music Education

The conflict described above arises when music education aims to engage with the lifeworlds of students while students are interested in a highly controversial music genre. In this chapter, I would like to name several aspects that might spark this conflict.

First, there is the problem of authenticity. Teaching Hip-Hop in formal education contexts faces the fundamental difficulty that music education can be

1 Additionally, I identified the topic of gangsta rap in several other textbooks that implicitly refer to the subgenre, for example, by dealing with artists who are typically associated with it. I will not adress these examples in the present chapter.

seen as a nonauthentic practice (Low et al. 2013: 118). The topic of realness is particularly important within the subgenre of gangsta rap – reflecting a veritable "cult of authenticity" (Straub 2012: 12). Another related challenge concerns issues of social distinction in the production and reception of gangsta rap (Loh 2010: 5). The lyrics of many songs by gangsta rappers strongly reject traditional educational paths (Kautny/Erwe 2011: 171–172). When (music) education addresses gangsta rap, teachers must play a central role, despite their being seen as representatives of a privileged, academically educated milieu that is often criticized and called out in the subgenre (Kautny/Erwe 2011: 173; Kruse 2020b: 145). This raises the question of whether the "music is not stripped of its true function when it is brought into schools and pedagogically presented in the classroom?" (Kautny/Erwe 2011: 173). Young people use gangsta rap, among other things, to "distance themselves from the middle-class normative world" and to "emotionally retreat into their own musical world (e.g., from the institutionalized world of school)" (Herschelmann 2009: 172–173). Discussing gangsta rap in schools is challenging to reconcile with this function.

Focusing on the study material, there is another problem, which – as I will show in the next chapter – textbook authors try to circumvent using various presentation strategies. This concerns the problematic language and provocative content of gangsta rap songs. In the following section, I present the debate surrounding this issue, to then analyze how this issue manifests specifically in the textbook chapters.

Rap songs often contain content glorifying violence, as well as associated, discriminatory narratives and vulgar language: "Hip-hop music may appear to contain a constant barrage of violence, drug use, materialism, misogyny, homophobia, and other arguably negative social themes" (Kruse 2016: 16). Especially in the subgenre of gangsta rap, such content and linguistic elements often dominate aesthetic practices, song content, music videos, and artist styles of self-presentation (Sator 2017: 5). There is no uniform definition of gangsta rap – descriptions can tend toward either glorification or critical detachment (Russel-Brown 2004: 36; Szillus 2012: 41). However, it does evince various "areas of interrelated themes […] that consistently emerge in discussions of this art form" (Russel-Brown 2004: 36). These include topics such as petty crime, gang wars, violence, criminal family structures, the "hustler life" (drug dealing) and drug addiction, male (sexual) dominance, drive-by shootings, or a strong rejection of law enforcement agencies (Keyes 2002: 90; Szillus 2012: 41; Russel-Brown 2004: 36; Peterson 2012: 598). Such content is often accompanied by specific linguistic forms, such as the particularly assertive way of speaking

characteristic of gangsta rap, used to articulate street credibility (Süß 2018). Street credibility is a key characteristic of artistic performance in gangsta rap, "marked by an antiestablishment attitude" (Bruneder 2022: 82), which often manifests in a (glorifying) self-presentation of rappers as "pimps," "hustlers," "drug dealers," or "killers"(Lena 2012: 467; 467; Kurbin 2005: 360). These kinds of self-assertions are frequently accompanied by lyrics that denigrate marginalized groups, such as women or individuals identifying as Jewish or queer (Huber 2018: 11–12; Seeliger 2021: 31; Staiger 2018: 42–44).

The gangsta rap tropes listed here are in most cases highly sexually charged and contain criminal, violent, and pornographic elements. Considering these topics together with the vulgar and aggressive style of the lyrics, it becomes clear why the topic could provoke rejection or controversies in the context of schools (Russel-Brown 2004: 36). After all, topics relating to violence, sex, or pornography, are still taboo and avoided in most school contexts (see Martin and Nitzschke 2017: 98). In the public discourse on gangsta rap, it is often argued that the subgenre could be dangerous to young people in educational contexts (Schmidt et al. 2022: 44). In addition, addressing the subgenre of gangsta rap in the classroom runs the risk of reproducing discriminatory narratives, crossing the boundaries of democratic consensus, or introducing triggers for pupils who might be affected by these kinds of discrimination (Gäb 2019). Kruse likewise argues that the concerns of teachers who incorporate Hip-Hop into music education mostly relate to characteristics specific to the language and topics of the subgenre. Incorporating rap songs in curriculum therefore presents music teachers with the challenge of appropriateness in choosing music (Kruse 2016: 14–15). In this context, it should not be overlooked that the concept of appropriateness is normatively charged and can vary depending on the context (ibid.). Moreover, much of the content of rap songs should not always be taken literally. Rather, it often has a fictional, performative, and often exaggerated character, which oftentimes can be reinterpreted and relativized within the specific cultural context of its own community, in the tradition of Signifyin' (Kautny/Erwe 2011: 168; Toop 2000: 19; Rappe 2010). Nevertheless, it cannot be guaranteed that students will accurately decode vulgar, problematic, and discriminatory language, or engage with it in ways that are ethically reflective (Kautny/Erwe 2011: 170), because certain content, such as lyrics openly reproducing racist, sexist, antisemitic, or queerphobic narratives or advocating violence, cannot be relativized by any cultural practice specific to Hip-Hop (ibid.: 169). At least in Germany, this problem also raises legal difficulties: The Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors

(BPjM) examines books, films, and songs for their potential to harm the well-being and development of children and teenagers. Media flagged as harmful by the BPjM are not to be made accessible to students (Meier 2009: 28). Although several gangsta rap tracks and albums have already been placed on the index of flagged content (including various songs by German gangsta rappers Bushido, Fler, and Kollegah), there are many other, sometimes problematic gangsta rap songs that have not been included.

So how should educators deal with these songs if they are thematized in class? And what presentation methods, areas of focus, and pedagogical guidelines do textbook authors employ in addressing the topic of gangsta rap? Researching these and other questions seems extremely relevant, especially as there is still not enough empirical research on how Hip-Hop, and especially gangsta rap, is already being used in educational contexts (Kruse 2020a: 498), A better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of using gangsta-rap for music-based learning in schools could help improve future music pedagogical practices and ideas. And this is where my research project seeks to intervene by examining the ways in which gangsta rap is represented in current teaching material for music education.

Method

The significance of textbooks for music education is controversial – since the 1990s, with the advent of "new media," many have predicted they will soon become obsolete (Wollinger 2022: 3). Nonetheless, textbooks have certainly continued to be used, "albeit in a modified form" (Parma 2022: 44). Although textbook analysis cannot yield any insight into how the material is ultimately employed in music education, there is clear evidence that the content they offer is used selectively to prepare instruction (Cvetko 2023: 55; Heß 2016: 183); textbook are often repurposed as a "source of materials," as "reference works," or as "guides" (Jünger 2006: 236). As a medium for conveying a body of expert knowledge, a textbook is built around contents and pedagogical methods containing not only neutral information but often also methods of (re)production shaped by subtle value judgments, as well as knowledge that is both representative of hegemonic discourses and selective in the perspectives it offers. This can be seen, for instance, in how textbooks set priorities, choose terms, and incorporate or fail to consider various positions (Bittner 2011: 13; Schinkel 2018: 95–97). Such patterns of representation are not immediately legible on the page but

must first be reconstructed and made visible (Höhne 2003: 44). In the remainder of this chapter, I apply such a reconstructive approach to analyze the ways in which gangsta rap is represented in selected textbooks.

I begin my analysis with a quantitative inventory, aiming to identify the number of textbooks that explicitly address the topic of gangsta rap. I then focus in on two of these books, more closely examining the contents and pedagogical approaches against the backdrop of the theoretical principles outlined above. It should be emphasized here that this analysis offers a first insight into a complex field of issues related to (popular) music pedagogy, in which numerous other factors and actors play a role.[2]

The sample considered in this chapter comprises all textbooks approved for the seventh and eighth grades by the German state ministries of education (as of July 2022),[3] excluding songbooks. In total, I identified twenty-four such textbooks, analyzing them independently of their recommended suitability for different types of schools (special schools, *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*), as these vary according to the guidelines issued by the various state ministries of education.

The focus on textbooks for seventh and eighth grades is particularly interesting because students of these grades are usually between twelve and fifteen years old, thus representing the main target group of the (gangsta) rap subgenre (Herrschelmann 2011: 72; IFD Allensbach 2021).

Analysis

A review of all twenty-four music textbooks for schools identified a total of three that explicitly address the topic of gangsta rap. Considering that gangsta

2 The study presented here comprises preparatory research for my dissertation, in which I will employ methods of discourse analysis to ask how discursive systems and the power they claim reproduce music pedagogical knowledge about gangsta rap in approved music textbooks in Germany for secondary education.

3 The term "approved" denotes the federally controlled approval process that underlies many (music) textbooks in Germany. In many German federal states, the approval for the use of textbooks falls under the ministries of culture and education of each state. Textbooks are usually first reviewed by these authorities for their conformity with the German constitution and the established school curriculum (Kultusministerkonferenz 1972). In some cases, however, such an approval process can be waived (Wendt 2010: 83–86).

rap as a subgenre has established itself as the most economically successful and popular rap genre in Germany (Seeliger 2021: 34), the proportion of chapters on gangsta rap appears low. The following table (Table 1) provides an overview of those textbooks and textbook chapters that explicitly address the topic of gangsta rap:

Textbook	Chapter on gangsta rap	Publisher
musik live 2 (2009)	Gangsta-Rap (Gangsta rap)	Klett
Popularmusik im Kontext (Popular music in context, 2007a)	Aus dem Ghetto in die Charts – Niggaz With Attitudes: Gangsta, Gangsta (From the ghetto into the charts – Niggaz with attitudes: Gangsta Gangsta)	Helbling
Im.Puls. Ganz einfach Musik (Im.pulse. Simply music, 2009)	Die Geschichte des Hip-Hop (The history of Hip-Hop)	Helbling

My overall corpus analysis reconstructed thematic structures and constitutive elements of the textbook chapters. This provided insights into structural commonalities, dominant topoi, and value systems in the material being examined. I identified repeating representation strategies, exemplified in two of the three chapters listed above: "Gangsta-Rap" from the music textbook *musik live* 2 (2009), and "Aus dem Ghetto in die Charts – Niggaz with Attitudes: Gangsta, Gangsta" (From the Ghetto to the charts – Niggaz with Attitudes: Gangsta, Gangsta) from the textbook *Popularmusik im Kontext* (2007a). My analysis will be limited to these two chapters since in the third chapter "Die Geschichte des Hip-Hop" (The history of Hip-Hop) from *Im.Puls. Ganz einfach Musik* (2009) does not address gangsta rap as an overarching theme, but only briefly touches on it as part of a historical portrayal of Hip-Hop culture. I will now discuss selected aspects of these two textbook chapters.

Popularmusik im Kontext (2007)

The first chapter to be analyzed in this paper comes from the textbook *Popularmusik im Kontext* (Popular music in context) and is titled "Aus dem Ghetto in die Charts – Niggaz With Attitudes: Gangsta, Gangsta" (2007a: 136). The book dis-

cusses the group N.W.A and their track "Gangsta, Gangsta" under the heading "The Ghetto as Attitude" (ibid.). Rather than the actual song lyrics, the textbook provides a short summary in German of the four verses and of the interlude (ibid.: 137).

The teacher's manual for the textbook (2007b: 157–159) describes how this chapter is to be used in music education: students are to discuss the extent to which the music video and the contents of the song "Gangsta Gangsta" "neutrally depict, condemn, or praise the life of gangs on the street" (ibid.: 159). The song and video are said to "stand for the style, background, and message of the Hip-Hop group N.W.A and numerous other groups" (ibid.: 158). Teachers are also instructed about the supposedly correct interpretation that the album *Straight Outta Compton,* which features "Gangsta Gangsta," "does not critically describe life in the ghetto, but glorifies it" (ibid.: 158).

The information text about N.W.A comes across as generalized and lacking in nuance, and the presentation by the textbook authors can be strongly challenged in view of the historical development of the rap group: N.W.A is known for commercializing pop culture and glorifying violence in mass media, but it can also be seen as part of a social-critical movement denouncing racist police violence and other forms of injustice (Krims 2000: 81–82; von Stetten and Wysocki 2017: 257). Skepticism is thus justified toward the claim that the songs on the album *Straight Outta Compton* "do not really represent a critical description of life in the ghettos" (*Popularmusik im Kontext – Lehrerausgabe*, 2007b: 158). In "Fuck tha Police" (1988), for instance, N.W.A addresses social issues such as police violence and racial profiling: "A Young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown / And not the other color so police think / They have the authority to kill a minority" (N.W.A, "Fuck tha Police," 1988).

The analysis also reveals that the summary offered by the textbooks of the lyrics to "Gangsta Gangsta" lacks nuance (*Popularmusik im Kontext 2007a: 137*). The abridged version of the specific lines discussed in the book do not accurately reflect the content of the song. One example is the fourth verse of "Gangsta Gangsta," rapped by Eazy E:

> And all you bitches, you know I'm talkin' to you / "We want to fuck you Eazy!" I want to fuck you too / 'Cause you see, I don't really take no shit / 'Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last (N.W.A: "Gangsta Gangsta," 1988)

and is paraphrased in the textbook with the sentence: "Eazy E boastfully presents himself as a ladies' man" (*Popularmusik im Kontext* 2007a: 137). Else-

where, the line "If ya fuck wit me / I'll put a foot in ya ass" becomes "If you act stupidly, you'll get a kick in the butt" (ibid.). In censoring all vulgar expressions from the original song lyrics, the German summary strips out not only the flow but also the sexist and violent metalevel of the content. The teacher's guide reveals that the editors of this textbook are not aiming to faithfully reproduce the songs' lyrics, as they believe that "an in-depth examination of the text does not seem appropriate given the content and crass forms of expression" (*Popularmusik im Kontext – Lehrerausgabe* 2007b: 158). In this case, we find a strategy for dealing with a the problematic language and topics from a gansgsta rap song that both avoids potential conflicts and trivializes its content, presenting the material to students without any critical context or assessment.

Notably, the analysis of the textbook chapter also highlights the undifferentiated handling of racist language. The N-word from the line "Here's a little somethin' bout a nigga like me" (N.W.A, "Gangsta Gangsta," 1988) is paraphrased in the German version without any commentary or contextualization as "a little story about a nigger" (*Popularmusik im Kontext* 2007a: 137). Ice Cube uses the N-word in this line as to describe himself, but the translation generalizes this act by changing the narrative perspective from personal to authorial. The N-word thus appears as a supposedly legitimate term for Black people. Furthermore, terms such as "colored ghettos" or "race riots" are used (the German word "Rasse" is not comparable to the English term "race" due to its strong association with the nazi era). In the German-speaking world, self-designations have become much more accepted and common in public discourse, with terms such as "colored" ("farbig") being rejected. This chapter, however, unreflectively reproduces racist discourse, not least when a student might read this part aloud. This does not align with Kruse's recommendation for how to use racist phrases/terms in rap songs: "It might be acceptable to hear the n-word in musical examples but unacceptable to say the word in class" (2016: 19). This seems particularly paradoxical given that the textbook authors avoid and trivialize potentially problematic aspects of the featured song "Gangsta Gangsta," even as the textbook itself does not eschew discriminatory language.

musik live 2 (2009)

The second chapter I analyzed from the textbook *musik live 2* is entitled "Gangsta-Rap" (2009: 25). An introductory text giving background information discusses the main features of gangsta rap lyrics, among which it includes "violence and drugs," as well as "criticism of the American Dream, racial dis-

crimination, and experiences of the ghetto" (ibid.). As a further task, students are expected to listen to the song "Gangsta's Paradise" by the rapper Coolio and play the music to the song on suitable instruments. As a final task, the class is then expected to come up with a "four-line rap on the topic of friendship," "and rap it to the playback of "Gangsta's Paradise" (ibid.).

The chapter focuses on the rapper Coolio and his track "Gangsta's Paradise" – a song that offers a critical take on the brutal conditions and crime prevailing on the streets, from the perspective of a young man living and growing up there.

> Fool, death ain't nothin' but a heart beat away / I'm livin' life do or die, what can I say? / I'm 23 now, but will I live to see 24? / The way things is goin', I don't know (Coolio: "Gangsta's Paradise," 1995)

The song sharply condemns violence and its glorification by artists. For this reason, according to Ladson-Billings, the track is more accurately classified under the subgenre of conscious rap rather than gangsta rap (2015: 412).[4] Seen thus, in pursuing the pedagogical goal of "getting to know and playing gangsta rap" (*musik live* 2 2009: 25), the textbook has chosen a song that does not belong to this subgenre of gangsta rap but instead offers a critical perspective on some of its typical themes. Hence this chapter, too, actively avoids and prevents engagement with the musical and textual characteristics of a representative song from the genre.

The same is true for the task suggested by this chapter: "Think of a […] rap about friendship" (*musik live* 2 2009: 25). The focus here on the theme of friendship ignores the commonly used tropes of gangsta rap previously outlined in the background text – "violence and drugs […] criticism of the American Dream, racial discrimination, and experiences of the ghetto" (ibid.: 24). Considering that gangsta rappers, by definition, stage their authenticity through stylistic devices such as being tough or ruthless, as well as hedonism, violence, and crime (Hagen-Jeske 2016: 110), the reference here to "friendship"

4 The subgenre of gangsta rap is often very difficult to distinguish from other forms of street rap, pornographic rap, conscious rap, etc. Boundaries are fluid, and artists frequently collaborate across genres. In the case of "Gangsta's Paradise," however, the song cannot be clearly categorized as belonging to the genre of gangsta rap. Unlike typical gangsta rap tracks, which often idealize or glorify crime, violence, and drug abuse, Coolio in "Gangsta's Paradise" takes a critical stance opposing these narratives (Ladson-Billings 2015: 412).

as a theme to be explored is both ill-fitting and trivializing in avoiding central topics of the subgenre.

Further Results

The analysis of these two textbook chapters reveals a common strategy of presentation: historicization. This applies first to the selection of the interpreters and tracks used in each of the chapters. Both songs presented as exemplary (Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise" from 1995 and N.W.A's "Gangsta, Gangsta" from 1988) were released more than ten years before the first publication of the textbooks and are thus anything but current.

The strategy of historicization can be observed in other areas of popular music education. Terhag, for instance, points to such widespread strategies of historicization in music education, explaining this phenomenon by the fact that music teachers (for reasons that include their own music socialization) find it significantly easier to integrate established classics from popular music into music education (2010: 11). This contrasts with the pedagogical challenge of dealing in music education with current and "frequently changing one-hit wonders" (ibid.), producing two sharply opposed positions reflecting different generations.[5]

Conclusion and Outlook

My chapter began by discussing a dilemma facing music education, as the subgenre of gangsta rap, the most popular rap genre among young people, ought to be included in curriculum that includes students' lifeworlds, although it is the target of vehement criticism for a number of reasons. Music education faces numerous problems in engaging with gangsta rap. In addition to issues of authenticity and social codes, these primarily concern the fact that songs from the genre typically glorify violence and discriminatory language. Gangsta

5 Indeed, in this context, it should not be overlooked that engaging with current popular music in a textbook, a format whose productive involves significant effort and is intended to provide teaching material for a long period of time, proves to be much more difficult than, for instance, in a specialist magazine published monthly (Jünger 2006: 99). That said, suggested classroom tasks could be formulated with instructions to reference current hits and artists.

rappers often work with criminal, pornographic, and violent narratives performed within the semiotic framework of the "street" or the "hood" (Seeliger/Dietrich 2012: 22). It is not uncommon for these songs to denigrate and insult groups of people affected by discrimination.

In order to determine the extent to which this problem manifests itself in educational contexts, I conducted an analysis of music textbooks. My analysis showed that the treatment of gangsta rap in pedagogical material is characterized by reservations and concerns. This observation is reflected in the restraint of the publishers and authors of approved music textbooks for seventh and eighth grades. Only three out of twenty-four music textbooks explicitly address the topic of gangsta rap at all, meaning a significant minority engages with one of the most popular music genres for you people worldwide. Preliminary research findings show that the international (school) music pedagogical context is increasingly opening up to Hip-Hop practices in general (Nitzsche 2022: 163; Imort-Viertel 2022: 400). But in my opinion, this development also reveals a clear tendency in which music pedagogy is increasingly dealing with forms of Hip-Hop that provoke less controversy.

My exemplary analysis of these two chapters also made clear that the textbook producers resort to certain presentation strategies in order to avoid specific language and content that is particularly charged in this educational context. These strategies primarily manifest themselves in representations that avoid, trivialize, and historicize artists' songs and sociocultural backgrounds in ways that lack cultural nuance. Kruse (2016), too, observes such a presentation strategy of "avoidance," describing two different ways in which music education can engage with problematic content and language in rap songs. Either music teachers decide to support the students in undertaking a reflective process in which students critically question content and other aspects of the music against their respective sociocultural backgrounds, thus using it as a site for learning and negotiating sociopolitical topics – a process Kurse calls "engaging language […] [and] negative social themes directly" (Kruse 2016: 19–20; see Bandow 2022: 229). Or they decide to "work around language […] [and] negative social themes" – for example, by only using the instrumental or "clean or radio friendly versions" of the respective songs, from which problematic words have been removed (ibid.: 18–19).

In the case of my analysis, both textbook chapters can be categorized among the second of these two strategies – of "working around" the challenges these materials pose in the classroom (ibid.: 18). Instead of inviting a classroom discussion about the controversies that have grown up around

gangsta rap, textbooks circumvent many aspects of the subgenre that might deserve critical engagement by summarizing lyrics in ways that trivialize the songs, assigning learning tasks that are unsuitable to the students or the material, choosing song examples that are in fact not representative of the genre, or employing broad generalizations – up to and including incorrect sociocultural contextualizations.

My analysis aims to clarify fundamental questions about how music that provokes controversial discussions is being engaged in music education. It has shown that these textbook chapters present students with generalized depictions of the subgenre gangsta rap that are trivializing, avoidant of conflict, and historicizing. In current pedagogical material, various gaps can accordingly be found both quantitatively in the degree to which the topic is taken up and substantively, revealed by my analysis of presentation methods, in issues stemming from the violent and discriminatory content and other linguistic aspects of gangsta rap songs. The extent to which these gaps can be found in actual teaching practice remains an open question. Nonetheless, initial studies suggest that despite how important Hip-Hop is in the lives of many young people, it is rarely discussed in the context of music education in Germany (Viertel 2020). Even though Viertel does not specifically deal with the discussion of gangsta rap in music education, it can be assumed that the conflict she observes intensifies if we focus on the subgenre gangsta rap, given the problem areas identified.

The present chapter highlights that an in-depth debate about gangsta rap in music education is still taking place. Providing future impulses for changes in music education requires that we examine and transparently confront, in our pedagogical practices, the dilemmas I have outlined above. Not least, such an investigation can help enable music educators and authors of future teaching and learning materials to acquire a critical and diverse perspective on youth subcultures that are highly meaningful, such as Hip-Hop and its subgenre gangsta rap.

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