Capturing UK drill in its complexity: critically assessing the justifications for the criminalisation and censorship of UK drill music and Black cultural expression

by

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Abstract

This research study produced a critical understanding of the policing of UK drill music by British authorities, by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with UK drill artists, producers, and listeners. The thesis gives voice to the UK drill community to generate an alternative insight into the heavily stereotyped Black music genre, and thus, the data was subsequently used in conjunction with interdisciplinary literature to form empirical chapters regarding theories of audience reception, concepts of authenticity and debating UK drill's value. Findings from this research study highlight the complexity and nuanced nature of UK drill and dilutes the alleged relationship between the genre and unlawful behaviour. It further argues that the latter assumptions transpire due to gross "misinterpretations" of UK drill music consumption, drill conventions, drill's purpose, and its alleged link to criminality. Due to this, the thesis concludes that criminalisation and censorship of UK drill music is unhelpful from a crime-reduction and prevention perspective.

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Abbreviations

DMTC – Drill Music Translation Cadre

MPS- Metropolitan Police Service

CPS – Crown Prosecution Service

CJS – Criminal Justice System

CBO – Criminal Behaviour Order

GVM – Gang Violence Matrix

BPM – Beats Per Minute

Participants

Listeners:

- Louis
- George
- Jasmine
- Danny
- Anthony
- Kyle

Producers:

- Matthew
- Camden
- Evan
- Kit

Artists:

- Damian
- Logan
- Corey

Introduction

Since its emergence in London's Brixton in the mid-late 2010's, UK drill music has been subjected to vast police, media and public scrutiny. Yet in spite of 2021 seeing the first ever drill song, Russ Millions x Tion Wayne's "Body" (2021), to reach number one in the UK official singles chart, UK drill stakeholders are still experiencing unjust levels of censorship and criminalisation (Fatsis, 2021, Ilan, 2020). To expand, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, Dame Cressida Dick, and the Home Office (2019), claim that UK drillers "glamorise gang or drug-selling life, taunt rivals and normalise weapons carrying" (Dearden, 2018: n.p.). As a result, early 2019 saw the first UK drillers, Skengdo and AM, in British legal history to receive a nine-month suspended prison sentence for performing their song, 'Attempted 1.0' (Goulding, 2019; Patternson, 2021), and the use of police *'rap experts'* to decode UK drill for the Crown prosecution Service are now in high demand (Garden Court Chambers, 2020c). Censoring UK drill for broadcasting the realities of social injustice, racial inequality, and violence, however, raises questions about the use of UK drill lyrics and music videos as autobiographical confessions to establish guilt, and whether such practices reveal racially discriminatory politics fuelled by negative stereotypes of Black British rappers (Fatsis, 2021).

The policing of UK drill has arguably underestimated the fact-fiction hybridity of the nuanced genre (Ilan, 2020; Lynes et al, 2020). It is for this reason that the remainder of this thesis will endeavour to fill the qualitative gap in existing research concerning the perceptions of the policing of UK drill. The research study will give voice to an otherwise voiceless and stereotyped music community, by using data drawn from semi-structured interviews with UK drill artists, listeners, and producers, in addition to literature from psychological, cultural criminological, and sociological research to form a series of interdisciplinary empirical chapters. The thesis will begin with a literature review titled "A brief history of political control over Black music". It will locate UK drill within a wider historical pattern of political control over Black music and will

subsequently demonstrate how those employed under the Criminal Justice System debatably target and misread UK drill. Chapter two will then outline the methodology and research process and research questions. To provide a richer understanding of the debates on UK drills relationship to violence, chapter three "A critical engagement on UK drill images, lyrics and meaning", will explore whether the justifications for criminalisation are based off of user experience of UK drill, by demonstrating how UK drill is used, perceived and its influence on consumers. It will further explore where discrepancies lie in "misinterpretations" of Black music and UK drill, based on one's race and age. Chapter four, titled "*Drill typologies and conventions:* the complex use of authenticity by drillers", will investigate whether the criminogenic scenarios and driller personas depicted in UK drill are literal. It will introduce new typologies of authenticity and authentic UK drill conventions, like the profitable qualities of destructive personas and violent lyrics within drill, as well as the effects of commercialisation on the latter. Finally, chapter five "*The value of drill:* the making and use of a vilified genre", will debate whether the consequences of criminalisation will actually prevent criminal behaviour, by uncovering the value of UK drill to its stakeholders, financially, therapeutically and as a method of desistance. Via exploring theories of audience reception, the concept of authenticity and the value of the genre, this thesis will therefore capture UK drill music in its full complexity via offering an alternative perspective on an otherwise vilified music genre. In line with Ilan's (2020) standpoint, this thesis will argue that criminalising and censoring UK drill is a street-illiterate practice, which will likely produce counterproductive effects from a crime-reduction and prevention standpoint.

Chapter 1: *Literature review:* a brief history of political control over of Black music

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will assess how Black music genres have historically been disproportionality policed based on two factors: drug use and gang affiliation. Drawing on concepts such as colour-blind racism, stereotypes and aesthetic order, this chapter will attempt to fill the gap present in analysis of UK drill by the police, media and prosecutors (Jackson, 2004; Fried, 2003). This analysis will utilise concepts such as: authenticity, audience reception and value. Without the careful consideration of these factors, it is not plausible to assume that these institutions have an accurate depiction of a genre which is easily and often misunderstood.

For the duration that Black music has achieved commercial success among White mainstream society, it has also been the target of ruthless scrutinization by White police at various levels of enforcement, centred around its presumed adverse effects (Scott, 2020). Born the mid-late 2010's as a new Black music genre, UK drill, given its raw, gritty, and cutting-edge nature, unsurprisingly lay at this historically problematic intersection between artistic Black cultural expression and unjust policing (Fatsis, 2021; Fatsis, 2019; Storey, 2012). Of late, UK drill has been exploited by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to secure convictions (GRM Daily, 2020; Garden Court Chambers, 2020a). It can be argued that Black music has moved from being perceived and monitored as a social and cultural issue, to one that has led to exploitation and legislation (Garden Court Chambers, 2020b).

1.2 A brief history of political control over Black music

This chapter will briefly explore the consistency and political context of control regarding the historical sanctioning of Black music genres by the police, in order to uncover the continuities of racism and oppression. Namely, Black music has seen sanction from political forces from the 1920's, from popular genres like jazz, blues and grime and understanding the disproportionate policing of these genres is an effective means to understand why the Black voices of drill are being targeted compared to their White contemporaries (Rose, 1991).

1.3 Different genre, same narrative: blues, jazz, grime, and oppression

Established in the late 1800's in the southern states of America (Oliver, 1997), blues music swiftly gained the unwanted attention from critics who branded the genre as the 'devil's music'. This is echoed in UK drill music being similarly labelled as 'demonic' (Mararike and Harper, 2018; Grearson, 2014; Rose, 2008). Taboo lyrics featuring racial inequality, promiscuity, and drugs, led to blues' demise as a morally and musically debased influence on young White middle-class listeners (Blake, 2007; Gardstrom, 1999). Namely, the relationship between blues musicians and the use of drugs for improved performance were of the upmost concern to the British police (Spracklen, 2017). Irrespective of its influential position in popular music, blues remained under the watchful eye of police institutions (Garden Court Chambers, 2020a). This was until the eventual commercialisation, suppression and cultural appropriation of blues music from the late 1960's. Young White consumers continued to claim the rights to blues music (Sullivan, 2003), marketed as an anti-racist move against racial discrimination in society (Adelt, 2007). The reality, nonetheless, aided in the further silencing of Black voices and the White commodification of the blues genre (Adelt, 2007). Questionably, yet expectedly, conservative blues culture led to its *newfound* brilliance as a quaint and delightful artifact of a golden Black age,

responsible for its contribution to other genres such as pop, jazz and rock and roll (Gardstrom, 1999). It is peculiar that authentic blues music, formerly viewed as a suspect of moral disintegration, quickly dropped from police-radars following its appropriation.

This pattern of police scrutiny and targeting of Black artists continued into the jazz era. Heavily rooted to the blues genre, jazz was recognised as the fresh sound of Black music in the late-19th century to early 20th century. The image commodification experienced by its predecessor, blues music, positioned jazz as the symbolism of borders between White and Black, wealth and poverty, commercialisation and orthodox behaviour and deviance (Grearson, 2014). Critics, however, viewed jazz as a threat to society, White masculinity, White art, and White ideas (Bergers, 1947: 430; Daniels, 2002; Coroian, 1943; Daniels, 2002). Police utilised a bigoted label of 'primitive jungle music' (Anderson, 2004; Winick, 1959) potentially derived from the Otherness of jazz. In turn, American police fixated on its adverse effect on Black youth and White audiences into unsolicited sexual activity and drug consumption (Kofsky, 1971; Schneiders, 2008; Fachner, 2002). Beginning with club owners and band leaders efforts to tackle drug trading in house, police bodies began to patrol the streets of America and make arrests of jazz musicians in the late 1940's (Schneider, 2008). The arrests of Black musicians eventually led to a large number of clubs losing their cabaret licenses hence hindering business and income for Black musicians (Schneider, 2008). Campaigns followed swiftly that called for jazz to be removed from the radio, to shelter 'respectable' listeners from its impurity (Ogren, 1992).

A key figure during this time was Harry Anslinger, the first commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) in the United States in 1930 (Torgoff, 2017). Anslinger played an influential part in American punitive drug legislation and the subsequent development of the British system of drug controls (Blackman, 2004: 7). Consequently, Anslinger dedicated time and effort to hotly pursue Black musicians and their suspected connections to drugs, revealing his xenophobia and moral stereotyping and bigoted attempts to maintain the integrity of the White race (Solomon, 2020). For instance, to eradicate the cause of what he

feared was the narrowing of racial boundaries and interbreeding, Anslinger solution was to rid White America of the influence of jazz (Shapiro, 1999). Anslinger and his supporters began by the "The Marijuana and Musicians File". The contents were assembled via employing federal agents to closely monitor jazz musicians and record their every 'deviant' moves, which could later be relied on in court to secure conviction and criminalise non-Whiteness (McGettigan, 2020; Smith, 2018. N.p.; Hari, 2015: n.p.). In a statement to the public, Anslinger generated significant race panic by declaring "the increase [in drug addiction] is practically 100 percent among Negro people" (Hari, 2015: n.p.) and "Their Satantic music, jazz and swing result from marijuana use. This marijuana causes White women to seek sexual relations with Negroes, entertainers and others… Reefer makes darkies think they are as good as White men" (Hari, 2015: n.p.). The FBN's policing strategies which informed British systems of drug control was not a drug issue, it was a race issue. With narcotics used as a scapegoat to cover racially motivated policing, Anslinger was able to justify the existence of the FBN and arguably live out his racist fantasies of targeting America's vulnerable minorities. Due to its initial success, drug abusers were denounced and triggered society to associate minorities, musicians, or both, with drug use (Blackman, 2004; Shapiro, 1999). Today, jazz and blues bars across the globe are considered 'high culture'. This alone serves to question the legitimacy and racial motivations of the police, considerably as this discriminatory policing has persisted towards Black music genres, like UK drill, into the 21st century.

UK drill's predecessor, grime, emerged in the early 2000's as a resurgence of the British rap genre and following the waning of UK garage in London (Fatsis, 2019). Though UK drill and grime share similarities in their emphasis on authenticity and gritty portrayals of urban life, grime is best known for its stark realism to braggadocious fantasies in response to the commercialisation of pop music (Hsu, 2018; Adegoke, 2018; Virk, 2018). With YouTube not arriving until 2005, early UK underground grime primarily lived on pirate radio (Barron, 2013) and was subject to excessive policing by the London Metropolitan Police who justified their actions via isolated violent altercations surrounding the UK garage group, So Solid Crew (Ilan, 2012). Just as the MPS (Metropolitan Police Service) targeted UK

drill with Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO's), Operation Domain and gang injunctions, UK grime became routinely surveilled as a criminal subculture under the Promotion Event Risk Assessment Form 696 (Fatsis, 2019; Scott, 2020). Form 696 was introduced in 2005 following a spike in shootings at UK garage concerts, however, UK grime became its main target to minimise any enhanced risk at concerts and ensure the public's safety (Wicks, 2019; Metropolitan Police Authority, 2009). Original versions of the form required venues to provide information regarding audience ethnicity and the disclosure of personal information on artists and promotors, which was then used to carry out police investigations 14 days prior to the events (Perera, 2019; Metropolitan Police, 2009). Failure to submit said forms or satisfy the police resulted in the cancellation of the event or having to hire additional and expensive security staff (Gilroy, 2003). Numerous UK grime artists, like Giggs, had tours and gig line-ups cancelled, thus hindering their careers, and suppressing the scene's growth (Fatsis, 2019; Bramwell, 2015). Due to Form 696's disproportionate focus and effect on Black artists, Mayor Sadiq Khan called for a review which led to its eventual removal in late 2017, and though the MPS alluded to the criticisms of the form, it ultimately did not offer a formal apology to those who it directly affected, labelled and scrutinised (Fatsis, 2019; Mayor of London, 2017). UK grime's subsequent commercialisation and entrance into the mainstream via artists like Stormzy and Skepta ultimately paved the way for new gritty Black music genres, such as UK drill. Nonetheless, prior to their appropriation, the fear, censorship and criminalisation of new Black music continues to persist (Rose, 1991), which will now be explored.

1.4 *Black musical censorship:* 'noise' or 'art'?

Music has been central to human life since before the advancement of complex language (Adorno, 1976; Storey, 2012) and African American's have made

considerable contributions to the art of music and its numerous genres (Floyd, 1996). Dating back to the age of Slavery, Black music existed as a vice for communication, venting emotions and resistance and sharing life stories (Martinez, 1997; Gilroy, 1995; Hall and Jefferson, 1991; Berry, 2017), and although slavery legally ended in 1865, racial discrimination persists (Jimenez et al, 2008). In its response to racial discrimination, dominant ideologies, and structural and systemic inequality, Black music has presented itself as an authentic source of oppositional culture (Rose, 1989; Rose 1994). Black music's defiance against standard and commercial musical conventions appoints it as a nurturer of critical enlightenment, and an active force in social life to catalyse social change and liberalism (Giddens and Sutton, 2017; Jeffries, 2001). Moreover, academics have long observed that Black music, particularly rap, has acted as an unconventional coping mechanism for Black inner-city and impoverished youth who may use the music and their existing environment to cultivate an authentic identity, one which has previously been thought to be reflective of the lyrical themes including drug consumption, violent behaviour, or gang affiliation (Watts et al, 2002; Gardstrom, 1999). Music as a part of one's social identity is something which is readily seen in music subcultures, yet this may lead Black youth to be misinterpreted as dangerous (sub)cultures of crime, as opposed to (sub)cultures of resistance (Hall and Jefferson, 1991; Tanner, 2009).

The disputed synonymous relationship between Blackness, Black music and criminality is not a new phenomenon in the United Kingdom, and we have manifestly failed as an assumed progressive society to successfully dissect and abolish Black musical censorship and its attack on freedom of speech (Smiley and Fakunle, 2017; Fatsis, 2021; Fatsis, 2018; Aldet, 2010; Saito, 2015; Mcdonald, 1988). A long history of young Black musicians across various genres have struggled to have their voices heard over the effects of persistent oppressive police racism and moral panic (Scott, 2020; Fatsis, 2019; Peršak and Di Ronco, 2021). Dubois (1970) dub this as a consequence of the 'suspicion of Blackness', a cultural marker of difference between Black people and White civil society which prompts authoritative bodies to obsessively view Black people as sources of

danger. In turn, Black music subcultures have been treated as contaminating, offensive, and threatening 'noise' to White political institutions, thus discounting its existence as an art form (Ogren, 1992). Fatsis (2021: p.g. 8-9) explains that Black music has been historically regarded as the embodiment of undesirable cultural expression that is aesthetically 'out of tune', culturally 'out of place' and politically 'out of order'. The 'order' in question is a product conceived by Britain's Criminal Justice System (CJS) based on what is acceptable in both White society and European traditions of music composition (Fatsis, 2021). Black music, in this sense, poses itself as fundamentally different based on its unique beats, rhymes, lyrics and flows, which are notably most characteristic of recent Black music genres, like UK grime and drill and their distinctive beats and style of lyricism (Fatsis, 2021: p.g. 9). In its independence from Western music, Black music genres are rejected as appropriate forms of art, while simultaneously accepted as sources of suspicion and deviation (Millie, 2016). In apprehension of its 'unruly' influence on White consumers and White culture, police, prosecutors, and judges act to preserve the 'order' defined by the CJS, via monitoring, regulating, and criminalising all those who could potentially threaten it (Fatsis, 2021; Rosenbuam and Prinsky, 1991; Millie, 2016). These discriminatory actions should not be mistaken as a neutral or unbiased function of the (CJS), rather this thesis argues that it is one that has arguably been intricately designed and successfully operated since the early 1900's, with Black music's alleged affiliation with gangs and drugs used as the rationale behind institutional racism (Fatsis, 2021; Gilroy, 1987; Malik, 2019; Scott, 2020; Malik, 2019; Gilroy 1987). Arguably, as long as the CJS views Black music genres as deviators of 'order' and continues to be marginalised from the rigid terms of Eurocentric aesthetics (Fatsis, 2021), then Black music will remain to be misconstrued and criminalised by those employed under the CJS.

1.5 Policing UK drill

Born in the South Side of Chicago in the mid-late 2010's, drill music grew rapidly as an expressive vehicle for Black youth and their experiences, where levels of urban violence and poverty had reached concerning heights (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkey, 2017; Levey, 2017). Melodically, drill music draws similarities from earlier genres such as trap and gangsta rap with its distinguishable flows and fast-paced beats (Virk, 2019). As a product of its environment, drill's lyrical content sparked controversy concerning its more direct relationship to crime, violence, and gang activity, due to its hyper-masculine and overtly raw accounts of life on the streets (Ilan, 2020). Chicagoan drill's artists in particular have sparked additional anxieties like Chief Keefs affiliations to the Black Disciples gang and the murder of L'A Capone (Green, 2018). Still, the genres popularity among public platforms like YouTube thrived, with drill music videos gaining millions of views across the globe. Following its proliferation in Brixton, South London in 2011, however, UK drill swiftly came under attack from police scrutiny, believing it to be a catalyst for serious youth violence and London's knife crime epidemic (HM Government, 2018; Tatum, 1999; Jackson, 2018; Gunther, 2008). Published in 2018, the Serious Violence Strategy named the UK drill's online space as an outlet supplying vulnerable youth with unprecedented opportunities to receive and deliver taunts to rivals and glamorise the gang and drug-dealing life (HM Government, 2018; Stuart, 2019; Stuart, 2020; Omaji, 2003; Lynes et al, 2020). Despite a coalition of academics and experts heavily criticising the 2021 Policy Exchange report as "factually inaccurate, misleading and politically dangerous" (Mahalingam, 2021: p.g. 1), the report was firm in its view that 37 per cent of gang related homicide cases between in 2018, and 23 per cent in 2019, were linked to drill music, with a further 40 per cent of cases linked to social housing estates (Falkner: 2021: p.g. 9). These accusations were potentially fuelled by the deaths of UK drill artists like SQ, GB and SA, who had been linked to rival London gangs such as the Harlem Spartans and Moscow 17 prior to their murders (Harkness, 2013; Booth, 2019; Drillr TV, 2018; Sky News, 2020; BBC Newsnight,

2018; Ferrari, 2018. N.p.). Sadiq Khan, The Mayor of London, however, responded “there is no evidence to suggest that certain genres of music are directly responsible for criminal activity” (Sho, 2020; Jones, 2008).

1.5.1 Removing online UK drill content

As Kubrin and Nielson (2014) asserted, we are witnessing Black music shift from censorship, to using lyrics as evidence in criminal trials to establish guilt (Quinn, 2018; Rymajdo, 2020). Among the responses to UK drill is the MPS’s utilisation of Operation Domain, involving the tracks and censorship of the drill music scene to preventing attacks via removing UK drill music videos from YouTube (see Appendix 1 regarding the drawbacks of such practices) (Reidy, 2020; Ferrari, 2018; BBC, 2018; Metropolitan Police, 2018). This is frequently done, however, devoid of any evidence that the music video could be linked to acts of violence (Edwards, 2019; Morrison, 2018). The MPS have instead operated under the instruction of Metropolitan gang-crime chief, Commander Jim Stokely, who has argued that drill musicians should be regarded as terror suspects under the Terrorism Act (2000) (CPS, 2019; Thapar, 2018; Barsa et al, 2016). In this logic, policing UK drill music videos becomes purely anticipatory and unlocks endless opportunities for MPS officers to make racialised assumptions based on stereotypes that young Black men dressed in balaclavas must be inherently violent (see Appendix 3), regardless of performative factors such as costume and fictional character (Fatsis, 2018; Ilan, 2020; Downes, 2018). Since 2015, The Metropolitan Police reported that 1,900 UK drill music videos had been indexed and 124 of those were successfully removed from the platform in 2018 as potential sources of harm (Waterson, 2018). Of those, 20 convictions were confirmed and 18 resulted in prison sentences (Mayor of London, 2020. N.p.; Edwards, 2019; Dearden, 2018; Mayor of London, 2020). Once in the hands of the prosecution, UK drill music videos are being used in relation to serious

offences including drug conspiracy and murder, which may also be presented in court without post-dates and thus stripping UK drill music videos of their relevance and context (Rymaido, 2020).

1.5.2 Bad character or convincing performances?

Permitted under section 2.101(1) the Criminal Justice Act (2003), lyrics and videos can be cited as 'bad character' evidence, which are relied on as proof of the defendants reputation or misconduct. It needs to be examined, however, why this racial decontextualization of Black expressive culture via conflating art and character is permitted, seeing as UK drill is known to incorporate fictional or exaggerated story lines (Garden Court Chambers, 2021). Dr Eithne Quinn adds that this makes it inappropriate to use UK drill and rap in a courtroom setting (Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2020), and while a small volume of defence teams are aware of their right to appeal this evidence do so, it is often unsuccessful (Nielson, 2012). Even if successful, Saleem, R v [2007] EWCA Crime 1923 demonstrated that juries are regularly insufficiently informed of how to decode or use rap lyrics as sources of bad character evidence (Baili, 2007. N.p.). A study by Fried (1999) gave participants identical "violent" lyrics from different music genres. All participants evaluated the lyrics more literally and negatively when they believed the lyrics were rap lyrics and agreed that rap needed more regulation than country songs. Evidently, if there are predispositions held against the rap genre and Black rappers, even if subconsciously, then there are major implications for using UK drill content in a court setting as evidence of bad character (Fischoff, 1999; Fried, 1999; Tyson, 2006; Rose, 2008; Tyson, 2008). Placing such weight on the subjective voices of young Black artists arguably allows for their adultification and discounts factors surrounding conceptual maturity (Goff et al, 2014). We cannot expect young Black artists to fully comprehend the legal repercussions of their creative content and career-driven

personas, nor can we expect police, judges, and juries to understand the nuances of Black cultural expression.

1.5.3 The Drill Music Translation Cadre

In their aim to assist the Crown with decrypting the Urban British language present in UK drill lyrics, the London Metropolitan Police formed the "Drill Music Translation Cadre" (DMTC), identified as a group of police officers who act as rap expert witnesses (Quinn, 2018). The idea of an 'expert' present in the court room is initially promising, yet young Black defendants are frequently advised not to take the stands to defend their content (See Appendix 4 & 5 for the issues regarding this practice) (Quinn, 2018; Quinton, 2015). This leaves drill music stakeholders repeatedly defenceless to the uncontested judgment of supposed 'experts' and inflammatory drill music content, in a predominantly White Crown Court (Quinn, 2018). To illustrate, a police 'rap interpreter' appointed on a 2018 conspiracy and assault case branded drill as 'street realism' (CambridgeCore, 2020; Rymajdo, 2020; Ilan, 2020), despite that urban British language present in drill is highly contextualised (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). Due to this, translators of the geographical origins of UK drill jargon may misinterpret the genre's sentiments (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). By looking at UK drill and other rap genres through a realist lens, the DMTC testimonies will fail to educate judges and jurors on unfamiliar, yet important, rap conventions. The DMTC status further allows them to oversimplify, grossly take out of context and strategically cherry pick lyrics and gestures in UK drill content, to create any narrative which fits their case. Since there is currently a lack of credible experts across the UK, such as appropriate academics or social workers (see Appendix 5 for more examples of suitable drill decoders), it is plausible to argue that many UK drill stakeholders are not being given a right to a fair trial (Garden Court Chambers, 2020b; Malik, 2019; Quinn, 2018).

1.5.4 Drill gangs or drill *and* gangs?

In an analysis of 30 cases used in criminal court proceedings in England and Wales between 2005 and 2020, lyrics and participation in rap music videos were used predominantly as evidence against young Black male defendants, to construct case theories to the jury based on stereotypical narratives about Black youth culture (Garden Court Chambers, 2020a; Garden Court Chambers, 2020b, Garden Court Chambers, 2020c). The case of R v Sode [2017] EWCA Crim 705 (cited in Oswusu-Bempah, 2020), along with 21 others of the 30 cases, cited lyrics and videos as evidence of gang relations by way of joint enterprise (Keith, 2021; Malt, 2019). This practice has now been progressively used since the Policing and Crime Act (2009), which problematically categorised drill rappers as gang members (Fatsis, 2019). Skengdo and AM, from a group called '410', were two of the earliest and most successful UK drill artists to receive a nine-month suspended sentence in 2019 for breaching the terms of a provisional gang injunction for performing their drill song, 'Attempted 1.0' (Thapar, 2018). The MPS's case stated that the song would trigger gang related activity in the artists local area, and under the terms of the sentence, they were subsequently banned from specific locations, censored from performing their material, and from mentioning certain people in their songs. Despite the allegations, the 410 artists had not had any interaction with the police prior and have moved freely and safely within rival postcodes (GRM Daily, 2020). To secure the gang injunction the police had to verify that 410 were both a gang *and* musical group, with the MPS stating that 410's activities "including but not limited to the production of drill music videos…have amounted to gang related violence" (Hancox, 2018: n.p.). Ominously, new legislation in 2015 updated the definition of a gang to any group consisting of a minimum of three people who share similar characteristics, to make it "easier for courts to grant injunctions" (Home Office, 2015. N.p.); it is

anticipated that 410 therefore fell under this broader definition. Furthermore, the 2021 Gang Violence Matrix (GVM) has shown that of 2151 individuals in the GVM, 1700 are of Black ethnicity. Plainly put, the definition and disproportionate application of the word 'gang' to Black males induces adverse categorisations of Black male criminality, with UK drill rappers material fuelling said racial stereotypes (Fried, 1996; Fried, 2003). In fact, the Policy Exchange report (Falkner, 2021) uncovered that simple acts, such as sharing a drill music video online, was one method used to place individuals on the matrix. This functionalist, behaviouristic and mechanicalistic approach to UK drill is arguably centred simply on whom the ordinary Black individual or high-profile characters associate themselves with, their musical preference, their artistic expression and where they live.

Evidently, criminal and civil law are being exploited as instruments of oppression and poetic injustice against Black music subcultures, with UK drill being the current most hotly pursued. The MPS, however, does not stop there. In 2018, a key pioneer of the UK drill scene, 20-year-old Digga D and former member of the 1011 gang and musical group, was jailed for one year for conspiracy to commit violent disorder (BBC iPlayer, 2020). Though his career and music were thriving, the prosecution used Digga D's music videos as evidence of bad character. Alongside this sentence, Digga D and 1011 were amongst the first artists to be imposed with ancillary Criminal Behaviour Order's (CBO) that directly affects their ability to make music (Patternson, 2021). The case of R v Browne-Morgan [2016] EWCA Crime 1903 Section 22(4) has shown that it does not need to be proven beyond reasonable doubt that imposing a CBO would prevent the offender from further illicit behaviour. Thus, the threshold for gaining this order is concerningly low, making it an easy method to target artists and ultimately purge drill. Under the terms of the three-year CBO, both parties involved in the case must not contact other members of the group unless for the purpose of recording or performing music with police approval, they must not refer to certain individuals or postcodes and are banned from performing seven specific songs. Upon creating or featuring in new music, Digga D and 1011 must notify the police within 24 hours of publication, and 48 hours' notice before live

performances, which can be shut down by the police if they believe it will cause violence (Waterson, 2018). Following his release from prison, Digga D was subject to random home visits, frequent stop and searches, obligated to report to his probation every three hours from 11am-11pm each day, banned from going to his home in London and was made to stay in an approved premises in Norwich (Garden Court Chambers, 2020b). All of which directly impacted his ability to create music and ultimately make money.

1.6 *Thoughts:* UK drill at the heart of Britain's cultural, moral, and racial crisis

The criminalisation and censorship of UK drill is not going to tackle the social and personal issues discussed within the music (i.e., poverty, violence, institutional racism) and it will not address, nor significantly reduce knife crime and serious youth violence. The deliberate normalisation of oppressing Black cultural forms of artistic expression has operated covertly under the cover of colourblindness or colourblind ideology (Gregg, 2013), and for as long as the CJS, policy makers and other institutions deny the deeply rooted systemic racism and racial inequality, then chronic adverse outcomes for non-White individuals will persist (Steen et al, 2005). Race, therefore, *needs* to be acknowledged to emphasise how unjustified and racially discriminative this form of musical censorship truly is (Equality and Human Right Commission, 2020). Most concerningly, this is certainly not the first Black genre to be targeted, however, the policing of Black music has become significantly more punitive over time and is "a new crime, but the same old culprits" (Gilroy, 2003: n.p.). There has been an array of controversial White artists who have managed to aggravate parent culture, such as Marilyn Manson and his satanic and suicidal references and Eminem's exceptionally controversial, yet somehow socially acceptable rap song "Kim", regarding his violent predispositions towards his ex-wife. Nonetheless these artists were not all regarded as representatives of their respective genres, nor were their songs

censored or the artists criminalised to the extent that UK drillers are (Negut and Sârbescu, 2014). Pop, rock, and other predominantly White genres have therefore continued to be exempt from having the adverse actions of few artists destroy the perception of the entire genre and its stakeholders (Hall, 2018). The same, however, cannot be said for Black music like blues, jazz, grime, and drill (Hall, 2018). It begs the question, why is discussing drug use, violence, and other explicit discourse acceptable for some artists and genres, but not others?

1.7 Different time, different perspective

So, why is it that the public, media, and police perception of Black music, such as jazz, blues, and grime, have altered through history? Perhaps, in the instance that an individual thinks of previous Black music genres, they are able to do so with no ulterior media or institutional influence. Rose (2008) noticed that Black music ceased to be considered a threat once it was no longer *the sound* of the generation that listened to it. It feels ironic that 2021 has witnessed the first ever UK drill song to reach number one in the UK official singles chart, Russ Millions and Tion Wayne's "body" (2021) (Copsey, 2021; Ahmed, 2021), as although it may represent that the genre is entering the mainstream, its heightened popularity may also entail considerably more police attention. Arguably, until UK drill is no longer considered the *'it'* music of today's youth, it will continue to be negligently conflated with crime, deviance, and race (Rose, 2008). To assume that the latter coexist, nonetheless, is to mask over the root causes of youth violence and knife crime in the UK. It is not farfetched to believe that violence has stemmed from rivalries between drill gangs, but *it is* naïve to state that a Black music genre has largely contributed to such devastation, rather than facing the uncomfortable socio-economic truths that are also causing these instances of violence to occur (Hall, 2019). For instance, Winchester (2019) argues that knife crime is a product of austerity created by discriminatory politics responsible for

police cuts of up to 15% between 2010 and 2018 (Home Office, 2019), and have slashed the funding of youth services (Weale, 2020; YMCA, 2020). Meanwhile, they blame web giants for their lack of "social responsibility" for not removing artistic content which allegedly "incites and glamorises violence" (Dearden, 2019. N.p.). In a twist of hypocrisy, this condemnation stems from powerful politicians who have issued gruesome assertions such as "I will not rest until [she] is chopped up in bags in my freezer" as said by the former Chancellor, George Osborne regarding Theresa May (Elgot and Walker, 2018). While Jess Phillips MP has previously stated "I won't knife you in the back I'll knife you in the front" (Moore, 2018. N.p.). In their defence, there is no evidence that these individuals meant for their accounts to be taken literally. But just as with Operation Domain, it is not impossible, nor improbable, for evidence such as this to be to be twisted, censored, and condemned with no viable proof of its direct link to impending violence (Kenneally, 2018). Henceforth, it could be argued that the policing, censoring and criminalisation of UK drill and its predecessors is perhaps not based on what is said, but rather, who has said it (Reidy, 2020).

1.8 *Towards a better understanding of UK drill:* aims of this research study

In response to the current analysis of UK drill, this thesis maintains that three crucial factors are disregarded: authenticity, audience reception and value. Via relevant literature and data collected from semi-structured interviews involving drill stakeholders, this thesis will argue that utilising UK drill lyrics and videos as accurate depictions of the individuals character and life, negligently disregards that cultivating a violent reputation can be utterly separate to having the propensity to commit violent acts (Jackson, 2004; Writte, 2019; Green, 2018; Neal, 2012). Those employed under the CJS must consider a UK drillers propensity to craftly fabricate lyrics and their character, thus directly impacting the use of UK drill as bad character evidence or to prove gang affiliation.

Moreover, the thesis will seek to explore and question the threat that UK drill and other alleged problem genres pose on their listeners, via an interdisciplinary approach to theories of audience reception. We must understand how music is perceived, used and therefore its effect on a consumers behaviour, as well as how variations in understandings of UK drill due to race and age, can cause gross misinterpretations (Gardstrom, 1999; Rosenbuam and Prinsky, 1991). UK drill could continue to prosper with positive outcomes if up and coming artists, producers and more received the appropriate investment, education, and government support. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge the voices of UK drill stakeholders and the value attached to the genre, financially, emotionally, motivationally, and as a method of desistance, if we are to break the current damaging views and discriminative treatment of UK drill, and therefore of future Black music stakeholders.

1.9 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter explored the problematic intersection between artistic Black cultural expression and unjust policing. It began by offering pertinent contextual examples of the history of policing black music genres such as blues, jazz, and grime, seen as alleged symbolisms of moral disintegration, prior to the music's White commodification. The chapter then explored Black music's disputed connection to criminality, via the 'suspicion of blackness' and its deviation from Eurocentric aesthetics, to demonstrate a continuity of police racism against Black music compared to White music. It later detailed the specific harsh methods used to police/purge UK drill, such as CBO's, and how these practices continue to function under a colourblind ideology. The chapter demonstrated how Black music genres are primarily scapegoats for government transgressions, and finally, outlined the aims and content of the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research process. It will briefly outline the core information concerning the methods used in undertaking this research, such as formulating research questions, research participants and research technique. The chapter will further provide information on the impact of Covid-19 on data collection and participant access, as well as the ethical considerations unique to this research project, such as the associated risks of online-based research, and the researchers decision to anonymise participants. Lastly, it will assess the qualitative approach in the context of this study and will include discussions of critical concepts in qualitative data, such as the voice approach.

This research explored the recent disproportionate policing on UK drill music. The three pillars of this research were, hence, drill music, the criminalisation of drill music, and people's experiences and perceptions of drill music. As such, the researcher deemed it crucial to interview those who are directly involved with the drill scene as a tool to answer three research questions regarding the criminalisation and censorship of UK drill. This will now be discussed further.

2.2 Research questions

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) proposed that a research strategy or methodology is governed by both the research questions and the subject matter being investigated. As such, the rational which underpinned conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews and forming empirical chapters should be viewed as a tool to investigate and satisfy the following research questions:

1. What are the justifications for criminalisation and are these based off user experience of drill?

2. Are the criminogenic scenarios and driller personas depicted in UK drill literal?

3. Will the consequences of criminalisation actually prevent criminal behaviour?

2.3 Research techniques:

Semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Field diary.

Textual and thematic analysis.

2.4 Location:

Interviews were conducted online via video calls on Skype and Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.5 Research sample:

Due to the nature of qualitative research, the number of participants interviewed is often informed by the level to which the research questions have been addressed (McLeod, 2001). It was determined that an acceptable level of data saturation was reached once the research questions were answered adequately, which was estimated to be achieved by interviewing between ten to fifteen participants in this study.

In total, 13 research participants were interviewed.

2.6 Research participants:

Research participants consisted of those directly involved in the UK drill scene. By selecting these individuals, the research was able to provide detailed descriptions of the participants experiences with and perceptions of the criminalisation and censorship of UK drill music, to both challenge and enrich the researchers, police, and political understanding of the genre. As such, participant drill stakeholders included:

Artists (three)

Damien, Logan, and Corey.

Producers (four)

Matthew, Camden, Evan, and Kit.

Listeners (six)

Louis, George, Jasmine, Danny, Anthony, and Kyle.

2.7 Online participant access, recruitment, data collection and Covid-19

At the height of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020, national lockdowns were implemented. As such, researchers have faced complications leading to either suspending data collection or re-designing their projects to suit the social-distancing measures (Jowett, 2020). With many participants displaced from congregating in their usual environments with others from the drill scene, it felt improbable that building a rapport with drill participants would be achievable (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Kara and Khoo, 2020). Gaining physical access to participants in studios, UK drill gigs, music charities and subsequent gatekeepers thusly became replaced by necessary alternative methods, such as virtual communication tools via online platforms (Sah and Sah, 2020; Ravitch, 2020). Overcoming this required creating an online Instagram account for research purposes to enable myself to contact UK drill stakeholders. Features such as the 'following' tab attached to each Instagram account, Instagram stories, tags on pictures and drill fan pages, further enabled the researcher to discover a range of drill artists, producers, and listeners online (Gelinas et al, 2017; Carroll, 2021). By using the contact details provided on their profiles, over 150 messages and emails were distributed, 36 of which responded, and a final 13 agreed to participate. Of all participants, gaining access to UK drill artists and their management representation online proved most difficult, with the majority of individuals not accepting message requests from those who they do not follow.

National lockdowns, it seemed, yielded great flexibility with easy access to digital methods and social platforms such as Skype and Zoom. Furthermore, initial precipitating issues with validity, representation of those with no access to technology, privacy, confidentiality and WIFI problems were swiftly overcome (Salmons, 2009). Noticeable was how virtual interviews allowed for the participants to build trust with the researcher by remaining in a comfortable, non-intrusive and safe environment to engage in convenient online communication via WIFI or 3G. In addition, with the researcher merely appearing

as a face behind a screen, participants were distinctly more relaxed (Gruber et al, 2008). This could be due to participants feeling they could speak without consequence or judgement, or alternatively turn their camera off and ignore or block the researcher online. It further eradicated issues of cost and travel time. Nonetheless, ethical considerations of conducting research online still persisted.

2.8 Ethical considerations

Adhering to ethical guidelines while conducting research with human research participants is crucial to protecting the dignity, safety, confidentiality, and integrity of its participants (Roberts et al, 2021; Richards and Schwartz, 2002; Mauthner et al, 2002). Though qualitative data is largely interpretive, thus potentially yielding biased or controversial results, it nonetheless plays a crucial part in providing and validating alternative perspectives on social phenomena, compared to its quantitative equivalent (Sanjari, 2014). For this to be achieved, the researcher must ensure that the ethical principles of autonomy of participants and their views are upheld (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012; Christains, 2007). Completing both a risk assessment form and an ethics application which gained the approval of the ethics committee, ensured that this was achieved in this study. Subsequent to attaining participants, research ethics were adhered to by gaining written or verbal consent and were additionally informed of the research purpose and process via a participant information sheet (See appendix 9 and 10). Lastly, participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point and were asked to confirm if the researcher could audio record the interview for future transcribing purposes. Carrying out research online due to covid and the nature of this topic, however, produced further ethical issues.

Online-based research is relatively new, and thus, guidelines regarding contacting participants on social media platforms remain scarce. One issue that

arose during participant recruitment was that the researcher was unaware of the circumstances of those contacted (Dodds and Hess, 2020). In line with the concerns outlined by the researcher in the risk assessment form, one individual disclosed their criminality to the researcher by stating they were currently residing in a UK prison but were interested in participating. The researcher consequently ended all contact with the individual due to the ethical and practical complexities of prison-based research (i.e., barriers to access) (Abbott et al, 2018).

2.9 Anonymity and confidentiality

As part of the interview, all interviewee's were asked if they wished to remain anonymous. Twelve participants asserted that they had no problem with sharing their identity. During the last interview, however, one participant stated that they wished to remain anonymous, in fear that their answers appeared too anti-police or anti-government. Given that the participant had previously discussed how he had been targeted by the police, the researcher deemed it crucial to anonymise all participants to avoid further police attention. Due to the nature of the criminalisation and censorship of UK drill music and the treatment faced by its stakeholders (as detailed in the literature review), the researcher took steps to protect any personal information, and removed all identifier components and biographical details, by providing the participants with new identities (Sanjari, 2014; Roberts et al, 2021). Furthermore, the researcher and participant were the only individuals present during interview and only the researcher had access to and transcribed the audio recordings. Participant confidentiality was thusly maintained to protect their views of and involvement in the UK drill scene.

2.10 Assessing the qualitative approach

The need to address the research questions previously outlined derives from two gaps in existing research on UK drill music, as observed by the researcher. Firstly, there are few, but nonetheless exceptionally valuable studies which have focussed on UK drill music (Fatsis, 2019; Ilan, 2020; Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019; Green, 2018; Lynes et al, 2020; Quinn, 2018), indicating that the area demands further consideration given the harsh sanctions placed upon the music and its stakeholders in recent years. Secondly, of those that have explored drill music, scholars have primarily employed objective, quantitative, computational, and literature-based approaches, most of which lack the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders of the UK drill music scene (Wincup, 2017). There is an absence of voice for drill stakeholder experiences, feelings, and perceptions, as well as drills impact on their emotions, behaviour, and general life. The latter, consequently, calls for a more representative and interdisciplinary approach via qualitative methods, to gain a thorough exploration of a cultural trend and the effects of censorship on the UK drill community (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Blackman and Kempson, 2021).

2.10.1 *The voice and graphic approach*: a critical concept in qualitative data

The tradition of qualitative research on young adults began with the Chicago School of Sociology, specifically with Park and Burgess's 'naturalistic observations' and human ecology perspective from the early 1920s (Blackman and Kempson, 2021). As Blackman (2007: P.g. 700) explains, the antiquated idea of the epistemological irrelevance of emotions has formed a hidden ethnography regarding our understandings of young adults. This research study argues that

exploring said emotions and human subjectivity are crucial to understanding the social milieu's of young adults, to form better communication strategies and examine what remains underdeveloped in the research relationship (P.g. 711).

Employing qualitative methods in this research study allowed the researcher to take a holistic approach to the interview data and relevant literature, hence providing a richer understanding of the criminalisation of UK drill as described by those involved in the UK drill scene (Rubin and Babbie, 2008). The qualitative design utilised by this research hence formed exploratory and descriptive results, as opposed to explanatory predictions, to confront the negative assumptions associated with UK drill (Wincup, 2017; Salmons, 2014). In this way, the researcher could "go beyond personal experiences and observations to broader social and cultural issues" (Blackman and Kempson, 2021: P.g. 5). Though alternative qualitative data collections exist, such as participant observation and focus groups, the present study employed semi-structured qualitative interviews as the main method of data collection (Ravitch, 2020). A semi-structured study allowed for the researcher to maintain some explicit structure and control, while also allowing for reflexive interviewing and encourage natural flowing conversations (Gruber et al, 2008). Due to this, each interview lasted between thirty minutes to one and a half hours. Given that the primary aim of this research was to capture, represent and advocate the complex voices of those linked to the UK drill scene, whose voices are rarely heard beyond data collection and analysis, employing a voice approach ensured that the research data was centred on participant experience, authenticity, and validity, in as true form as possible (Watzlawik and Born, 2007; Brown and Gilligan, 2013; Mauthner et al, 2002). Furthermore, research participants were asked distinct questions related to their unique position in the UK drill industry (i.e., producer, artist, consumer), to ensure that responses were relevant to the participants experiences and perceptions. Regardless of certain limitations of the qualitative design, it nevertheless provides a level of depth and flexibility that a quantitative design alternative may not accomplish (Rubbin and Babbie, 2015).

2.10.2 Thematic analysis, empirical chapters, and textual analysis

Following the completion of interviews, the researcher transcribed each audio recording (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Pierre and Jackson, 2014). The data was later analysed thematically to identify individual voices, recurring issues, and areas of consensus (Weber, 1978). This process involved reading all transcripts and dividing them into distinct categories and meta-categories which were related to each unique participant group. This approach allowed the thesis structure to derive from the grounded analysis of the data (Franklin and Jordan, 1995). The software 'Nvivo' was originally considered as a time-effective coding system, nevertheless, due to the complexity of the software, the researcher opted for a traditional method of qualitative analysis by manually analysing the interview data to ensure familiarisation (see Appendix 6 for an example coding table) (Chandler et al, 2015). The whole truth, however, cannot be obtained via the subjective data alone, and thusly, the researcher undertook an interpretive approach by producing three empirical chapters. Occupying the core of the thesis with key literature alongside the use of quotations allowed the thesis to work at an intersectional level between cultural criminological, psychological, and sociological literature, and participant views on how drill is perceived and their desire to challenge misrepresentations. To further support this literature and interview data, a textual and content analysis was carried out on UK drill lyrics. UK drill songs were chosen at random, based on their success and level of police attention, to understand both its literal and subjective nature, conventional drill lyric themes and purposes, and how new interpretations can have a direct knock-on effect onto the policing of UK drill lyrics (see Appendix 7 for UK drill lyric content and Appendix 8 for a UK drill music playlist).

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter summarised how the current research was conducted, explaining the research questions which underpinned this study and thesis, in addition to the process used to access and recruit participants. The chapter illustrated how the researcher conducted research and recruited participants during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of the latter. Furthermore, it outlined the ethical considerations of the online research, including how the safety and confidentiality of participants were maintained. Next, the chapter detailed the justifications for a qualitative approach, including how semi-structured interviews represented the suppressed voices of UK drill stakeholders. Finally, the chapter described the analysis process and how the data, literature and lyrical content were incorporated into the thesis.

Chapter 3: A critical engagement on UK drill images, lyrics and meaning

3.1 Introduction

This chapter takes an interdisciplinary approach to critically analyse UK drill audiences at an intersectional level, between literature and research participant's views on how drill is perceived, used, and their desire to challenge misrepresentations, through the context of rap and heavy metal music. By utilising UK and US theory and research from cultural criminology, media studies and psychological theory, this chapter will attempt to revise the current perceptions of UK drill consumers in contemporary Britain. It will begin by exploring and critiquing earlier understandings of "vulnerable" consumers as argued by academics and the police. This will be expanded to evaluate the alleged threat posed by "problem" music, which will be supported via answers given by research participants of this study. Finally, the chapter will explore the versatile ways in which rap music and drill is used, perceived, and "misinterpreted" between consumers of different ages and races, as argued by interviewees, and how this directly impacts how UK drill is decoded by police rap experts. In sum, the chapter will answer the current studies first research question: "What are the justifications for criminalisation and are these based off user experience of drill?".

3.2 *Emphasising consumer agency*: media and police observations of drill music aesthetics

The concept of media influence on human behaviour and the academic focus on Popular Music became of scholarly interest in the early 1990's, following the development moral panic and police scrutinization surrounding alleged 'problem music'. As outlined in the literature review, Black music genres like jazz, blues, grime, and rap have been targeted by both the media and police, based on their presumed connection to drugs and gangs, as well as the fear of its effect on (White) listeners and (White) civil society (Berry, 2011; Steinman, 1988; Ricci, 2017; Marshall, 2011).

More recently, critics of the graphic UK drill genre has branded listeners "impressionable young people" who are frequently manipulated into acts of crime and deviance and desensitised to violence (Malik, 2019; Ferrari, 2018; GRM Daily, 2020; Trend Centrl, 2020; Irwin-Rogers and Pinkey, 2017; Dearden, 2018; HM Government, 2018). For instance, the Police Exchange Report (Falkner, 2021: p.g. 6) argued that drill music is "perpetuating violence and destroying lives among young Black Londoners", while Sophie Linden, London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, asserted that drill creators radicalise their consumers by "preying on different vulnerabilities" (Deardan, 2018, n.p.; Pinkey and Robinson-Edwards, 2018); with additional sources controversially comparing drill music's 'negative' impact, demographic and recruitment methods to that of the extremist group, Isis (Barsa et al, 2016. P.g. 47). Such comparisons remain damning by conjecturally comparing the stakeholders of an art form to those who are responsible for acts of terror responsible for taking lives of thousands of innocent individuals (Yourish et al, 2016). Raheel Butt, Founder and Director of The Compound and UK's leading expert in gangs, terrorism, and serious organised crime, endorsed the former via asserting "The Taliban, al-Queda and ISIS [are] do[ing] similar things… but with a different narrative" (Deardan, 2018: n.p.). The rationale behind these statements alludes to Goldie Lookin' Chains' "Guns Don't Kill People, Rappers Do", but, arguably, numerous groups do not

fully understand music which explores controversial themes, as well as how this contributes to gang affiliation and retaliation, nor how this music is being received. This arguably plays a critical role in negatively influencing society's view of the UK drill scene (Garden Court Chambers, 2020c).

Given the latter police and media views of UK drill, this research will examine current theories and data concerned with audience reception and influence, to question the validity and extent of the negative effect of UK drill. It will explore existing literature on whether exposure to drill music could logically contribute to an atmosphere of violence (HM Government, 2018; Fatsis, 2018; Deardan, 2018; Beaumont-Thomas, 2018; Malt, 2019). By extension, it will critically question views which assume that consumers interpret and act on "violent" texts or music, given the lack of viable evidential and scholarly support that music can lure listeners into lawlessness (Physics arXiv, 2020; Dearden, 2018). For the purpose of demonstrating a historical pattern of police scrutinisation of misunderstood (Black) art forms, this chapter will refer to UK drill as 'problem music', otherwise seen as genres which discuss socially taboo subjects such as drugs, violence, and gang affiliation. Although Hall's (1997) representation theory details that there is no *true* representation of people or events in a text (i.e., lyrics), there are unfortunately many ways it can be negatively represented. The potential scholarly and societal justifications to why such negative understandings of UK drill exist, will now be explored.

3.3 *Initial understandings:* alleged 'problem music' and assumed adverse effects

Early research demonstrated a causal link between mass media and mass audience, whereby media consumption was considered capable of injecting messages into homogeneous audiences (Storey, 2012; Glaveanu, 2009; Adorno 2001; Adorno 1973; Marcuse, 2013; Adorno, 2001). The commercialisation of music, henceforth, causes popular cultural forms, such as gangsta or protest rap,

to be reduced to its sales ranking as a commodity, thus minimising its central message and causing regressive listening (Danesi, 2012; Denisoff and Bridges, 2008). Scholars have applied these analogies to rap music in two ways. Firstly, to identify how young individuals perceive and evaluate music, and secondly, the harmful effects and negative outcomes caused by rap music consumption (Handforth et al, 2017). To expand, Christenson and Roberts (1990) explored how numerous popular discussions assumed that youth consumption engendered massive, instant, and negative media effects. Nonetheless, if the meaning of 'massive effect' refers to a drastic change in the behaviour of a large number of people, then this has failed to be demonstrated to this scale by existing empirical work (Christenson and Roberts, 1990). Hesmondhalgh's (2013) 'critical defence of music' alternatively demonstrates the universal appreciation and need for music (Bayem, 2018; Gilbert, 2009). Still, although the social value of music can be observed through its relationships between and within history, society, and the self, it is nonetheless continually subjected to public scrutiny that questions music's value. As Hesmondhalgh (2013: p.g. 2) asserts

> *they [critics] seem unable and unwilling in what they write and say to provide an account of how art, culture, entertainment, and knowledge might enhance people's lives more generally, and why these domains might need defending from the kind of degeneration and lack of public support*

In this sense, defending music becomes crucial in its efforts to enlighten people of its countless values on an individual and social level (Alexander, 2020; Rose, 2014). To assist with the outlined view of music held by Hesmondhalgh, this research study mitigates the threat of UK drill, by investigating whether consumers actually valued or felt inspired by the dark violent scenarios described in drill, which will now be further discussed.

3.4 *UK drill as 'problem music':* the triviality of violent lyricism and music videos on consumer behaviour

> *Millions of adults read real-crime books, murder mysteries and vampire novels without feeling the slightest urge to spill blood. They are acting on an ageless desire to inspect and even enjoy the dark and unfamiliar elements of human nature at a safe distance... Plenty of affluent White teenagers buy CDs by thug rappers, but they don't really want to get a pistol and shoot cops. They merely want a window into a subculture that is very different from their own.*
>
> Gardstorm (1999: 211)

Drugs, sex, and violence occur in some of the most successful television series. For instance, Game of Thrones sold 90 million copies worldwide and featured over 300 deaths, and movies like Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, made $357.4 million worldwide, despite being a fictionalised retelling of the Manson murders (Bean, 2019). This is not to say, however, that the creators or consumers of the content possess any criminal tendencies. Henceforth, those who critique UK drill should carefully consider how "the violent content does a lot for people", as one participant, Evan, explained.

Censorship based on the fears of corrupting lyrics is a crippling practice placed upon certain art forms, which dates back to the sanctions faced by the Sex Pistols' who were taken to court for displaying their "obscene" classic album "Never Mind the Bollocks" in store windows. Evidently, the idea that messages in the lyrics are an instruction to the audience to be delinquent, is about power, politics and the law (McDonald, 1988). As such it is vital to analyse to what extent consumers realistically pay attention to 'taboo' lyrics and music videos and its subsequent effect on their emotions and behaviours. As part of this thesis, all listener participants were asked what they personally believed was the most important element of a UK drill song is (i.e., the beat, flow, or lyrics). The logic underpinning this line of questioning was that, if consumers are

considerably less interested in the lyrics and music videos (seen as the focal threat), then rationally, drill discourse discussing violence, gangs, and drug consumption, could be considered as less, but still not entirely, threatening to drill consumers (HM Government, 2018; Pinkey-Robinson and Edwards, 2018; Irwin-Rogers and Pinkey, 2017).

In their paper examining young people's involvement with popular music, Christenson and Roberts (1990) highlighted that young people watch music videos for entertainment purposes, rather than for mood control or social reasons. Due to this, the lyrical content becomes fairly irrelevant in terms of its significance to young consumers. In fact, in one study, music videos are presented as having an impact on young people merely for its ability to add a visual dimension to the beat (Christenson and Roberts, 1990). From the field diary, two listener participants displayed their knowledge of the entertainment functions of UK drill music videos, as well as its lack of influence on them

> Jasmine: *yeah, if they do portray violence in that [way], that's because it's a music video and you're trying to grab your – the youths attention.*
>
> Matthew: *I see it more as an entertainment thing to be honest*

Furthermore, in spite of drill music videos occasionally containing graphic content, one must question why we do not also think of it as reprehensible for youth to watch gruesome horror movies, play violent video games, or view scenes containing suicide and murder in a Shakespeare play. More curiously, why do depictions of violence in UK drill result in sanction, such as the removal of UK drill music videos on YouTube, while the others do not? (Beaumont-Thomas, 2018; Garden Court Chambers, 2020b). Arguably, the idea that UK drill content incites violence amongst young people, whether by music videos or through lyrics, vastly underestimates the moral autonomy and intelligence of inner-city youth.

In another study, Kuwahara (1992) researched young people's involvement with popular music in her examination of a survey involving 235 students from both a

predominantly White university and a predominantly Black university, to understand the meaning of rap to Black students. For those deemed as 'hardcore' rap music fans, the lyrics they could relate to as a form of Black youth expression, were the central reason that the participant listened to the music (Kuwahara, 1992: P.g. 60). Reasons went beyond this, with students describing the messages as honest, imaginative and a positive influence. In adherence to this, as part of this research study, Danny underlined his appreciation of the honest voices of UK drill

> Danny: *I just like hearing the rawness of it, hearing someone truly say what they feel and no matter what they're saying, if you hear anyone talking about how they truly feel and what's on their brain it makes you wanna listen. If someone is talking with passion, it makes you wanna listen and I get that with a lot with drill and it just makes you wanna dance it's just the beats, the beats are bad!*

Interestingly though, for those who were not fans and did not listen to the music, rap was viewed as uninteresting, confusing, unmeaningful and vulgar (Kuwahara, 1992: P.g. 60). Similar findings were gained during this research study regarding those who do not interact with UK drill, as Anthony explains

> Anthony: *I feel as if because of the wordplay…sometimes…messages get missed and mixed up and some audiences may understand it and some other audiences might not… someone like me who's been in that environment might understand what they're saying but the media for example might portray that in a bad way and use that in a negative way and show negative light towards the artist.*

Regardless of the message and the students degree of appreciation of the genre, the overwhelming majority of students in the Kuwahra (1992) study prioritised the beat as their primary reason for listening to rap music. The central justification for this being that the beat was good to dance to. Therefore, this study supports Christenson and Roberts (1990) previous claim that music is used

by youth predominantly for harmless recreation purposes, as opposed to lyrically and visually 'taunting rivals' and 'glamorising violence' (HM Government, 2018).

Sullivan (2003) further examined racial differences in preferences for and interpretations of rap music, via a survey of 51 young individuals. Comparably to Kuwahara's (1992) survey results, Sullivan's (2003) Black and White participants equally named the beat of the music as the reason for listening to rap, with the message/lyrics placing second in importance. White participants, especially young women, were more likely to listen to rap music because it had a 'nice' or 'good' beat (Sullivan, 2003: P.g. 611). It was also assumed that Black listeners of rap music were predominantly more concerned with both raps' aesthetically pleasing sound *and* relatable messages, while White participants appeared to listen to rap music solely for its aesthetically pleasing sound (Sullivan, 2003. P.g. 614). This not only implies that White and Black listeners gain a different message from the same music, but it also strengthens the implication that while some listeners appreciate the message more than others, the innocuous beat is shown to be the superior element of rap music for its listeners. These findings were of significant interest to this research study, with almost all listener participants expressing their lack of interest in drill lyrics during interview. Instead, participants labelled the tempo, Beats Per Minute (BPM), skills of storytelling, rhymes and flows as the superior elements of a successful UK drill song. For instance:

> *George: when I heard it for the first time I was like 'woah' but then like once you listen to it a few more times– you don't pay attention to the lyrics if that makes sense? I like the momento and the back beat of the music. Ermm, yeah kind of like motivating in a way I guess.*
>
> *Danny: It's a high tempo, it's a high BPM so automatically makes you wanna get up and do tings if that makes sense… for drill it's just how they use their words and storytelling how they make their voice sound and how it goes along to the beat…it's how they play with the words and make it sound differently to each person so every person has their own style.*

> Louis: *Even though I don't quite understand half of what they're saying it's just still quite a – I dunno- it just like it rolls all into one and it all rhymes and it's just like a good like flow like rhymes…I'm not listening to it in a deep way.*

From the field diary, two drill artists also highlighted comparable areas of importance of successful drill songs

> Damien*: there's many reasons why people listen to drill it's not even just to do with the crime, it's to do with the tempo and speed, that's the main reason why I believe drill is where it is today, just that tempo and speed and the flow of it and everything like I think that's what causes people to keep listening…before I write, I think of flows first before I even think of the words. I might listen to the beat and then I just find the flow and then I start putting words into that flow, so it kind of depends on the beat I think it's more like… the rhythm and the style and the speed.*

> Corey*: I'd say it's a balance between the two but if your beats are not up to industry standard then it wouldn't get as much recognition nowadays. Flows, worldplay and bars are like the cherry on top.*

With listeners more interested in the delivery (flows) and creativity (rhymes and storytelling) of the artists, as well as the beats and tempo created by drill producers, this could perhaps imply that less societal and police anxiety should be placed on UK drill lyrics as inciters of violence. Additionally, the statements given by the participants of this research and additional studies provide an insight into how ones lack of involvement or relatedness to a particular music genre can cause a distorted understanding of controversial/problem music and its fans. While it cannot be denied that some individuals prioritise and pay attention to the lyrics, these findings do minimise the likelihood of a large-scale negative impact.

Moreover, examinations of consumer agency must also consider that these texts are open to more than one interpretation and can also serve a multitude of

unique benefits to each listener (Handforth et al, 2017; Miranda, 2012). Specific to this research study, no listener participants listened to UK drill for undesirable reasons. For instance, Anthony stated that he listened to UK drill to increase his work ethic or before nights out with friends, Kyle listened before school or during a walk, Louis listened to drill before work to get ready to start his day, Danny listened whilst washing up and George listened prior to using the gym. Finally, Jasmine stated

> Jasmine: *what I listen to, that's my preference as an individual. That doesn't reflect on my day-to-day life, profession, any of that nature. Cos I can get into scrubs and just perform a surgery just as well as being able to be in a club and boppin to drill.*

The latter exhibits how many UK drill consumers may listen to the music in mundane circumstances, for ordinary reasons, with UK drill lyrics merely being viewed as an added 'bonus'. No participants expressed using UK drill to psyche themselves up to commit acts of crime or deviance.

Though UK drill can be "misinterpreted" between fans and non-fans or critics of the music, it may also be due to the listeners age or race.

3.5 *Versatility:* discrepancies in interpretations of (drill) music based on age and race

As part of this research study, the researcher asked participants what could cause discrepancies in understanding UK drill. The two main factors mentioned were one's age and race, which subsequently linked to one's level of relatedness to UK drill. Seeing as those who create, listen to and police UK drill are of varying ages and races, it is likely that misconceptions of UK drill exist, which in turn, directly impacts how UK drill is policed.

The UK drill demographic is reportedly 15- to 24-year-old Black males from socio-economically deprived areas in London (Aklilu, 2018). *Coincidentally*, this demographic also has an established conflict with agencies of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), most recently shown through the criminalisation and censorship of UK drill (Sho, 2020; Dearden, 2018; GOV.UK, 2021). This has sparked fears and moral panic surrounding UK drill stakeholders which has been reinforced through the British media, who refer to the music as a "nihilistic genre filled with boasts of death and violence", while The Sun dubbed drill as a "Rap Bloodbath" (Simpson, 2018; Cohen, 1972; Sho, 2020; Ryan, 2018a). Given these derogative statements, this chapter will adopt a psychological and criminological analysis of how factors like age and race contribute to how listeners use, interpret, understand, and are affected by music. To illustrate, if numerous discrepancies in one's experience and perception of UK drill occur due to these factors, then producing general assumptions of UK drill's influence on crime is inadequate and ineffective means of crime control (Ilan, 2020).

3.5.1 *The generational divide:* discrepancies in understanding UK drill based on age

In a study conducted by Greenfield and her peers (1987), the comprehension of lyrics appeared to be unique between consumers of various ages. Most notably, it was indicated that young people's interpretations appear to be non-comparable to that of their older counterparts. In addition, ones comprehension and reaction to the music and messages relied most heavily on what the consumer considered the 'goal' of the message to be. For instance, to advise, to educate, to entertain or to persuade (Greenfield et al, 1987; Blosser and Roberts, 1985). Hence, one cannot claim that all consumers, or those of the same demographic, will engender a universal effect from listening to the same music. Interestingly, Greenfield and her colleagues study signifies that many young

people are unable to 'correctly' comprehend lyrics, thus adults and youth do not obtain the same understandings from music messages. For instance, Greenfield et al's (1987) Los Angeles study analysed rock music audiences of fourth, eighth, twelfth grades and college students by playing them Bruce Springsteen's song "Born in the USA", which expressed feelings of despair, disillusionment, and resentment about living in America. Surprisingly to the researcher, zero students from the fourth grade, 30 percent from eighth grade, 40 percent from twelfth graders and only 50 percent of college students accurately comprehended the songs message. Greenfield and her colleagues claimed that the catchy title of the song, "Born in the USA" created a misinterpretation of its overall themes of fighting against U.S. nationalism, which the listeners mistakenly viewed as an ode to patriotism. This led to a drastic drop in likelihood of participants actually *listening* to the lyrics, which is why the song is regularly used at political rallies. Overall, the researchers determined that the comprehension of rock music lyrics and music videos only developed with age, meaning that the majority of young listeners are likely to misunderstand lyrics. Perhaps, this level of misunderstanding could consequently make *problematic* music lyrics less harmful in terms of their effect or influence on behaviour for younger listeners (Patridge, 2020).

This study poses an important question in our analysis of UK drill lyrics, that being, do young listeners actually pay attention to or understand the controversial lyrical themes talked about in UK drill, compared to their older counterparts? In response to this, Aklilu (2018) argues "with millions of YouTube views across the span of the scene, would there be anybody left between the ages of 13 and 25 if drill really incited violence?" (Sho, 2020; Aklilu, 2018). To expand, as part of this research study, drill listener and producer participants explained the barriers between themselves and older generations in terms of their views of UK drill music:

> George: *if I played a drill song to my mum she would be like "oh this is bloody violent".*

Evan: *My nan she's 80, she's conservative, she's not violent so when she saw me do a new post of a drill track I produced on Facebook, she rang my mum and she was pretty concerned she's like "oh my god, is Evan involved in gangs? Is he ok?" and my mum was like "yeah he's okay…"…yeah she had to lie and say that I didn't produce it and she was just like "look, she's old, she don't understand, she reads the Daily Mail like just block her on Facebook or something" or like when they read these papers they believe everything and anything they see and it's easy to have that opinion.*

Matthew: *my parents just see it for the violence rather than the creativity behind it or the message. Say for example they could say "I stabbed and shot this person and I need help" but they would only hear "I shot and stabbed this person" you know what I mean?*

Evidently, these stakeholders of the UK drill scene demonstrate the generational divide in understanding the nuances of the UK drill music genre. According to Comte (1998), the conservativism of Generation X is frequently challenged by the Millennials, and vice vera. As tensions arise regarding the controversial nature of UK drill, individuals become aware of their membership to a particular generation, their values are made distinct and thus age-related conflicts arise. In line with this approach, much of the criticism and sanctions placed on UK drill derives from government establishments, which are predominantly made up of White, middle aged and middle-class individuals, who are often far removed from the life experiences of drillers. As two participants, Corey and Danny puts it:

Corey: *cos it's not your average proper horse-riding type of music, it's not music that snobs are interested in, so anything that they're not interested in, they are always gonna try like bop it down.*

Danny: *ignorance is bliss when it comes to the older generation.*

Furthermore, with Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick asserting that drillers blatantly describe "specifically what they are going to do to who" within UK drill music (Dearden, 2018b: n.p.), this research questions why rap experts and the

Drill Music Translation Cadre (DMTC) are therefore necessary to accurately decode and translate drill lyrics for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) (Persak and Ronco, 2021). While the work of Greenfield et al (1987) demonstrated young people's lack of understanding compared to their older counterparts, the British police instead insinuate that young drill listeners are capable of decrypting, comprehending, and influenced by UK drill music messages (i.e., gang retaliation). This is not to say that young people *can't* understand UK drill, as in many cases, they make for the best decoders. Still, as the previous section demonstrated, some young consumers do not understand the lyrics, nor do they care for them.

While misconceptions can arise because of one's age, it's may also be because of one's race, which will now be explored.

3.5.2 Misconceptions of UK drill, race, and crime

Although lyric comprehension, perception and uses of music vary based on one's age, it is also important to consider race in our analysis of audience reception. The criticism of UK drill is arguably inextricably linked to stereotypes of young Black men and anti-Black attitudes (Reiner, 2010). As such, this research study asked participants how one can gain an accurate understanding of UK drill and its lyrical content (Dunbar, 2019). Participants expressed that an accurate understanding can thus be gained via one's level of relatedness to the genre, through experiences, their understanding of UK drill's origins, if they have witnessed others involvement in scenarios described in UK drill, how much the individual *wants* to truly understand, and how much they enjoy the music. Interestingly, the common denominator for understanding UK drill, according to participants, were based on one's race (Nielson, 2012; Tanovich, 2016).

3.5.3 *Propagating misinformation:* is Black music reflective of Black lives?

Sullivan's (2003) study examining the racial differences in preferences and understandings of rap music displayed minor statistical differences between racial groups. Sullivan (2003) observes that while White participants displayed a lower commitment to the rap genre, it allowed them to vicariously fulfil their curiosities, learn about, and imitate African American's. Learning about or policing race and ethnicity via a musical genre, however, comes with limitations. Sullivan (2003) explains that rap is not inclusive of Black individuals who are older, located outside of the city or female. As a result, White listeners, police, and media, are more inclined to create an understanding of their Black counterparts based on stereotypes, exaggerations, and fictional storylines (Ilan, 2020), which in turn, produces prejudices towards Black individuals. Consequently, our attitudes towards young rap listeners should not be a 'one size fits all', lazy and convenient approach which assumes a harmful relationship between consuming drill, race, and criminal behaviour (BBC, 2018; Malik, 2019; Dearden, 2018).

Seemingly, Sullivan's (2003) study examining the racial differences in preferences and understandings of rap music displayed minor statistical differences between racial groups, emphasises that misinterpretations of rap and race continuously reinforce and cause misconceptions of the genres creators, and consequently, the Black community. If the latter is true with regard to UK drill music, the British authorities should accept what influence their race has on their perspective of a genre and subculture in which they are perhaps not entirely educated on (Kenneally, 2018). To expand, research conducted by Quinton (2011) found that being Black had a shared meaning among British police officers, which in turn, heightened their suspicions (Reiner, 2010). The formation of said stereotypes derive from negative police interactions with the Black community, where suspicion often originated from the individuals area, clothing (see Appendix 3 for more on UK drill style and stereotypes) and general demeanour. Inevitably, if the

only interactions between police and UK drill stakeholders is fuelled by suspicion of knife crime or gang violence, then logically, the police's lived experience of the drill culture will be indicative of violence and crime. In addition, statistics published in 2021 displayed that for every 1,000 individuals stopped and searched, six of those were White, while 54 were Black (Home Office, 2021: n.p.), and lyrics and participation in drill and rap music videos were used almost exclusively as evidence against Black people in criminal trials (Owusu,Bempah, 2020). Participants of this research study discussed the discrepancies in understanding of UK drill between themselves, the police, and politicians:

> Danny: *I'm not saying they should have to learn everything about the ends n' that, but, they're obviously going to get something different out of it compared to me… look who runs the country like…there's not many politicians… [that] come from a working class background, hardly any of them come from a middle class background like *laughs*…so with the people who run the country- the people who are making decisions for us have probably never been to a council estate.*
>
> George: *if you're looking at people who are in power in the country it's like White, Caucasian- in my opinion- they're tryna put the blame on the ethnic minorities…the conservative mindset where they're viewing and even to a certain extent like White supremacy basically so it's like 'oh there's crime going on it must be ethnic minorities'.*

3.5.4 *Policing Black expressive culture:* is it based on statistics, or stereotypes?

From the field diary, participants discussed how UK drill is now consumed by a multitude of different races. Despite this, participants described how UK drills messages and purpose are often misconstrued by White listeners who want to

be involved in the drill lifestyle, leading to cultural appropriation and adverse behaviour. Despite this, participants further believed that it is Black drill listeners who are continuously disproportionally targeted by the police as causes of suspicion compared to their White drill counterparts. This will now be explored.

Tanner and his peers (2009) studied media effects and audience reception in Toronto. The study gathered data from the Toronto Youth Crime and Victimisation Study and 3,393 self-administered questionnaires (Tanner et al, 2009. P.g. 701). It found that only young White and Asian rap listeners reported their involvement in property crime (Tanner, 2009. P.g 709). Not only does this show that rap's supposed harmful effect on Black youth is no more likely than it is on White and Asian listeners, but it also indicates that the relationship between being a fan of rap and delinquent behaviour, is ambiguous. Although Tanner et al's (2009) research took place in America with listeners of rap music, we should question why a significant police focus is put on Black rap listeners shown via stop and search statistics in the UK and America, as opposed to White and Asian listeners, who in this study, have been more inclined to be involved in crime. This implies that stop and searches are perhaps motivated by race rather than musical preference (Ilan, 2020; Williams and Clarke, 2018). Danny discussed how Black drill stakeholders are targeted by police, despite the immense popularity of UK drill amongst White listeners, saying:

> Danny: *Majority of people who listen to drill are not from areas where things are happening, well for the mainstream artists atleast. If you watch a Stormzy show, 80% of the crowd are gonna be White middle-class people, it's not a bad thing… but it just goes against what these statistics and people are saying [about Black listeners committing crime because they listen to drill].*

Alexander (1996) refers to White listeners' behaviour as attempting to 'master the art of being Black'. Due to the vivid and raw nature of rap lyrics, as outsiders of this culture and lifestyle, White and Asian listeners reportedly felt more inclined to involve themselves in what they *assumed* to be an 'authentic version of Black street life' (Sullivan, 2003; Tanner et al, 2009; Mahiri and Coner, 2003).

Reinforced by media articles riddled with stereotypes and myths regarding the Black community, Black individuals were more likely to remain sceptical of such reports, while White and Asian individuals were more likely to accept it as fact, thus satisfying their curiosities based on unrepresentative information (Fried, 1996; Fried, 1999; Fried 2003). During interview, Jasmine demonstrated how understanding drill and its origins based on facts, than from the media or the music, aids in an accurate understanding of drill:

> Jasmine: *[I understand] purely because I've grown up around drill and grime. It's just what I've listened to ever since I was… 7 or 8? ... because I had older cousins that lived with me, they sort of educated me, they were able to pass down the knowledge of the authenticity of drill and grime and educate me on the history and that's why I am able to listen to it comfortably because I know what that genre is about.*

Binder (1993) labels this as the 'No Harm Frame', whereby audiences of rap are able to distinguish what lyrics they should or should not take seriously, based on the cartoonish, ambiguity, braggadocio, and fact-fiction hybridity apparent in rap music (Ilan, 2020; Clay, 2003). One of Gardstroms (1999: P.g. 217) participants supported this by stating "I feel that music has nothing to do with the way I act… the stuff that they rap about half the time is not real. So, in order for me to commit a crime, I would have to take the music seriously and I don't do that" (Roskam, 1993: P.g. 57-57; Gardstrom, 1999). Negative content may be present, but this does not mean that listeners necessarily agree with its place in rap, nor does it guarantee a consequential effect on consumer behaviour (Sacco and Les, 2002; Jackson, 2018). In fact, Quinn's (2005) analysis of gangsta rap indicated that Black youth viewed gangsta raps claims more sceptically than their White counterparts. From the field diary, a participant from this research provides more depth to this,

> Kit: *You know those electricity boxes and they say 'warning danger, death do not enter' on it, are you going to go into that room? ...Well, the fact is, Black people have already been into that room, and we*

know why people are like "Umm well I mean it says danger, but I haven't seen what's on the other side of that door. Black people might be telling me what's on the other side of that door, I don't quite believe them just yet, they're really cool though so maybe what made them cool is on the other side of that door" …that is unfortunately [how] a lot of White people might be put into those sorts of scenarios.

The interviewee notes how Black people are able to listen to UK drill music from an objective standpoint. Informed by their own experiences, they are able to weigh up the dangers of the lifestyle's and scenarios discussed within the lyrics. White listeners, however, were seen by this participant as potentially more influenced by UK drill due to their interest, naivety, and ignorance of a culture of which they were not born into, in order to gain an authentic, or *'cool'*, subcultural status (Tanner et al, 2009; Quinn, 2005). Mailer's (1957) essay 'The White Negro' refers to these White listeners as 'urban adventurous', who look to African American's for cultural inspiration that "they find lacking in their own culture" (Couacaud's, 2014. P.g. 1). Criminality caused by UK drill would, in this logic, be committed by its White listeners, with Black listeners scepticism and knowledge aiding in their ability to resist any undesirable effect. Vaughn (2012) lends support by claiming that young Black rap listeners are generally less affected by rap lyrics promoting maladaptive behaviour, substance abuse, promiscuity, and misogyny, because the themes it presents are merely an indicative document/mirror of their own environment and the prevailing problems that the youth subculture face in their everyday lives. While the gradual commercialisation of UK drill has attracted a significant amount of affluent White teenagers (Weitzer and Kubrin, 2009), this does not explain why predominantly Black drill listeners are often assumed to be members of criminal gangs (Garden Court Chambers, 2020c). As part of this research study, and a YouTube interview with driller Loski (Trend Cntrl, 2020), participants explain their views on which drill listeners are likely to commit crime:

Loski: If you ever come to any of my shows… that crowd are like majority are gonna be bare White kids… if you look at the crime rate in

like Yorkshire, Bristol whatever, it's not the same as where the badness is really going on. So, they're not really my supporters- If you're saying that I'm inciting violence, I'm not inciting it to my hood or any other hood cos they're not really the ones listening like dat – it's the White kids that's listening.

Evan: *White males from like nice looking houses or whatever somewhere in Oxford or somin' saying 'oh personally I wouldn't have that' or this and that or just tryna incite problems they have nothin to do with. … some of the most privileged people look at it and have this weird fantasy.*

The substitution thesis puts forward that negative media effects are most prominent when the matters discussed are foreign to the consumers own experiences (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2010; Surette, 2018). For instance, affluent White teenagers residing in areas with low-crime rates were most likely to take these media crime messages such as criminal violence in television dramas or music, as reality, as they do not relate to the events portrayed. Kubrin and Weitzer (2010) explain that as a result, these individuals are more likely to not only develop a fear of crime but may also be enticed to engage in violent crime. In their critical review of the popular and scholarly rap music literature, affluent White listeners were seen to acquire the behaviour and views of the rappers they admire, even if they could not relate to them. Theoretically, the substitution thesis suggests that UK drill could pose as a potential risk for White affluent listeners.

Evidently, according to relevant literature and the participants of this research study, variations in interpretations of UK drill can massively vary between those of different age and races. This is, in turn, said to be due to the effect this has on listeners' level of understanding and relatedness of the genre. If an accurate understanding is not obtained by those who critique the genre, then does this cause issues with the way UK drill is currently being policed and decoded by rap experts? In addition, though the research and literature indicate that White listeners residing in affluent locations are more likely to take UK drill lyrics out of

context and subsequently act adversely upon consuming the music, this does not explain why predominantly Black creators and listeners of UK drill are being targeted. During interview, listener participants elaborated on this:

> Anthony: *the people that I think would kind of 'gatekeep' or keep people out of the sound, are funnily enough I don't think are people that even relate to what's going on and that's what I find crazy.*
>
> Danny: *if you're quite ignorant and you listen to drill, then you're going to be ignorant of the problems.*
>
> Louis: *the police officers- what if they can't relate to it? or what if they don't know the slang or what they've meant or if they don't have a past in what's happened so if they can't relate to it then I don't think they are qualified enough to translate it.*

The views of Black music's adverse influence on listeners has a lengthy history and legacy (Blackman, 2004; Fatsis, 2019; Garden Court Chambers, 2020a; Smiley and Fakunle,2017; Malik, 2019; Blake, 2007) and for those alienated from parent culture, secondary deviance may not merely be due to the music, but rather as a consequence of having one's moral character degraded and their music interests condemned, thus causing a negative self-fulfilling prophecy (Becker, 2008; Laughey, 2006). In response to the lack of understanding of these media messages, critics alternatively label and censor them. This view, however, lacks the acknowledgement that consumers are more autonomous than British authorities give them credit for.

3.6 *Not just drill:* Accounting for alternative factors leading to criminal behaviour

Thus far, this chapter has focussed on music's effect on consumers, rather than a consumer's autonomy and effect on music. Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding model of communication displays those individual factors such as unique

experiences, cultural background and social circumstances are held as central to the active audience's ability to decode the text through dominant, negotiated, or oppositional reading (Durham and Kellner, 2006). Gantz et al (1978) examination on how young people in the US (from junior high through to college) use pop music, tends to the Hall's explanations. The participants were asked questions related to their uses, gratifications, and reactions to the music they listened to. The study found that each individual will not interpret the messages in the same way based on their own social, personality, individual and structural differences which inevitably lead to variation in how young people use, interpret, learn from, and respond to the music media of which they consume (Quinn, 2005; Sullivan, 2003; Rose, 1989; Stephens and Wright, 2000). Arguably, given this, the actions of UK drill consumers do not exist in a vacuum, but are instead constantly negotiated and influenced by their individual surroundings. Thus, if a small number of consumers experience a negative behavioural impact from listening to UK drill, this does not mean the same impact can be generalised to all consumers. As part of this thesis, in addition to age and race, participants named social circumstances, cultural background and social class as factors that affect understanding drill. One participant said

> Danny: *since going to uni the amount of posh people I know who listen to rap music more than people from friends back home from the estates. It's just people get different things from it. So, who are we to say everyone will act the same?*

This supports the idea that listeners interpret the lyrics in drill tracks in a personal and non-uniform manner. Both George and Kyle recognise that they do not reside in the same environments as the artists and as such, the lyrics are not representative of their own lived experience. In this regard, the meaning intended by the source/producer cannot be viewed as fixed, nor determined (Durham and Kellner, 2006), with the listener interpreting the lyrics using their own personal paradigm. This refutes the stance on UK drill as a homogeneous form which 'incites violence' (BBC, 2018).

In line with this view is the 'interpretative model' which considers audience responses as influencers of the media via their engagement with or rejection of its output (Fiske, 1989; Hall, 1980). Participants of this research study described artists often get "shut down" by listeners, meaning they have to "stick with the story [they] started with and make sure they're giving supporters what they actually want" because "that's what sells". There is therefore a lack of recognition of a multitude of consumer-related factors, which contradict the existing perspective that violent lyrics will "fuel a surge in murders and violent crime" amongst UK drill consumers, as put by Metropolitan Police Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick (BBC, 2018). Arguably, these perspectives support the notion that cultural materials, such as music, are sometimes influenced and shaped by the audience who consume and use them, not the other way around (Ebare, 2004). If this is applied in the context of UK drill consumers, then it could be suggested that the police and public are not giving modern listeners autonomy for dictating the actions of the artists, what charts and the content itself. Katz and Blumler (1974:21) hence recommended researchers consider "what people do with media" rather than "what the media does to people" (Blumler, 1979).

Generally, based on these findings, the justifications for the criminalisation of UK drill are not soundly based on user experience. Considering that many listeners described enjoying UK drill for the beat, and with their own experiences and knowledge of the genre permitting them to have an accurate and objective understanding, it seems unlikely that a sufficient level of consumers would be negatively influenced by the genre to warrant the current policing of the music.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter argues that the justifications for criminalisation are not consistently based on user experience of UK drill. It began by outlining how British authorities and early research believed drill consumers to be vulnerable against lyrics which

glamorise violence. The empirical chapter utilised interview data and literature to demonstrate the trivial nature of 'violent' lyrics on behaviour, seeing as participants expressed more interest in separate elements of UK drill. Later, the chapter identified where "misinterpretations" of UK drill lie based on one's race and age. More specifically, older generations and White people were viewed by participants as having a less accurate understanding of UK drill, which in turn, questions why Black rappers are targeted, and why drill is decoded by predominantly White, middle-class, and middle-aged authorities. Finally, though drillers are sanctioned for creating violent content, it is likely the autonomy and demands of the consumer that has shaped drill and its content.

Chapter 4: *Drill typologies and conventions:* the complex use of authenticity by drillers

4.1 Introduction

The concept of authenticity derives from its predecessor, sincerity, meaning ones genuineness and honesty towards others, while Paddison (2004: P.g. 206) defines authenticity as being true to one's self for one's own benefit. For the purpose of this research study, we are defining authenticity as the presentation or visual cue of belonging, i.e., a presentation of membership or of living a particular lifestyle. Still, authenticity has no singular definition, and it is for this reason that it will explore authenticity of words, performance, and biography, centred on its typologies and its place in UK drill. The empirical chapter will deconstruct the discussions regarding UK drill and violence, by way of exploring the link between authenticity, crime, and drill. This chapter will examine ideas towards a new typology of authenticity linked to drill, centred on drillers staying true to their roots and pasts, and upholding their reputation, this chapter will explore what constitutes authenticity and its iterations and how key crime is to UK drill style (see Appendix 3 for more on style), lyrics, and persona. Lastly, it will look at the effect of commercialisation on UK drill. In response to the second research question of this study, this chapter will question the literacy of drill and whether this implicates using UK drill as a reliable source of police intelligence.

Adorno's (1973) critique of authenticity presents the "abused" term as an empty and manipulative word. Nonetheless, discussions regarding authenticity have, and remain to be, a strong influence amongst our conversations about music ontology (Paddison, 2004). As Adorno (1973: p.g. 123) notes, the distinguishable elements amongst "originals, fakes and copies" hold no objective answer and is rather one that is largely determined by individual perspective (Green, 2011; Paddison, 2004. P.g. 206). Given the tenuousness of authenticity, the relevance

of truth becomes absent in its definition and thus confirms the concept as a contested and problematic issue (Benjamin, 2007; Gilroy, 1995). Within the context of UK drill, the definition of authenticity would differ greatly in its usage between persons of artistic production, politics, and the Criminal Justice System (CJS). In this sense, the concerns surrounding authenticity shifts not only from the music itself, but to the message of one's superior identity exemplified through the music (Frith, 1981; Levinson, 2011; Stoicescu, 2020; McLeod, 1999).

In the context of UK drill, driller authenticity can be gained via one's biography, such as the realness/rawness of street life, discussing or flaunting crime, dissing "opps", and displaying Black or toxic masculinity, and sexism (Vugt, 2020). Based on how heavily policed UK drill is, it should be questioned how street-literate and truthful these particular claims to authenticity are (Ilan, 2020). Distrustful evaluations of UK drill may perhaps lack the acknowledgement of the role of performance in one's authentic identity, as well as not factoring how record companies can manufacture said authentic performances (Green, 2018; Green, 2011). That is, if the presence of performance is effortless in its execution, then separating authenticity from fiction and our idealised form of reality could remain undetected and thus unconsidered by authorities in their analysis of UK drill (Garzian, 2003. P.g. 12).

4.2 *Towards a new typology:* authenticity according to UK drill stakeholders

As already discussed, the term 'authenticity', in its most fundamental form, represents a commodity, person or action which is distinct from something that is mass produced, fake or copied (Paddison, 2004). Namely, authenticity refers to what construes the truth, leading Adorno (1973) to question what complexities relate to this concept. Examples involved, being true to self, true to identity, true to roots or true to origins (Paddison, 2004. P.g. 201). Given the multitude of possible classifications of what constitutes authenticity in regard to UK drill, it is

for this reason that this study interviewed drill insiders for enlightenment on this question, to set out and develop a distinct typology of authenticity related to UK drill artists (Williams, 2006; Ebare, 2004). The participants of this thesis defined authenticity, or an authentic driller, as one who: remains true to their roots, remains true to drill's origins, and upholds their reputation. Adhering to this was said to maintain or advance the drillers music career through earning the approval of consumers. Distinctly, violence as an authenticator of UK drill was absent from said definitions.

4.2.1 Remaining true to drill's origins

> Jasmine: *Grime and drill were born in basements, there were OG's just sitting there, and they were just spittin' and spittin'… and they would have battles and there's a whole history to rap, grime and drill that people will not understand. That's what they're missing out on is how it was purely born, the whole purpose of the genre was to educate people, inform people, it was brought out to show people 'look we can spit too we're not all criminals.*

The interpretation held by Jasmine named drill rappers who remain 'true to the roots of the drill genre' as authentic. From the interview data, creativity, artistry, and education, were amongst those emphasised as the foundations of authentic drill music (Dare, 2019). Arguably, UK drill as an authentic creative form of intelligence, concerning the storytelling of oppression experienced by minorities, rejects the notion of the genre as being authentically violent. Instead, music may be used to contradict to the latter stereotype of drill (Tyson, 2006).

4.2.2 Remaining true to their roots

When questioned what constitutes an authentic driller, all six listener participants named that the artist must remain true to their roots and biography. By doing so, the artist avoids being labelled as a sell-out, who has distorted their true selves to better fit in with the commercialised music industry. Three research listener participants explain:

> Jasmine: *Because drill is very much about, 'this is where I come from, this is what happened to me, I'm traumatised but I'm here, I'm pulling it through' and drill is much about being proud of where you come from really.*

> Danny: *kind of have to respect your roots but it's also about becoming who you are now and how you have to put that into your songs, or your music will never evolve because music is about life experience.*

> Damien: *end of the day supporters came for how you was, not for how you're gonna be.*

The interpretations above confirm that while drill is shocking in its content (Garden Court Chambers, 2020b), the context and tense in which these scenarios are explained should be key to our study of UK drill lyrics. For instance, as seen with artists like Jay-Z, Stormzy, Wiley and Headie One, describing their biography like hardships, violence, postcodes, and drugs, could merely be an attempt to respect their roots and appear authentic, despite fame perhaps utterly transforming their present lifestyle (Westwood, 2011). Certeau's (1988) idea of the significance of the everyday and its role in UK driller culture exemplifies the

complexity of translating one's biography and everyday into a song. Discussing such 'adverse' experiences, however, also triggers unwanted attention from the police (Amnesty International, 2018). Danny and Damien's responses further display the fine line between advancing as an artist and remaining humble to your roots, the imbalance of which could hinder the artists music career (RoadWorks, 2020b). For drillers, creating authentic drill music via remaining true to their past, therefore creates a dilemma of whether to satisfy law enforcement, or their audience.

4.2.3 Upholding reputation

The third typology of authenticity specified during the interviews, was upholding reputation. In sum, seven participants across all three groups shared this view. A common conception of UK drill is that violence is a key factor of the genres success. Witte (2019: n.p.) suggests that rappers are ranked by authenticity and their "relative merits are discussed in terms of who is the most violent". Therefore, developing a violent reputation would affirm drill artists as authentic according to an 'economy of street-cultural standing' (Ilan, 2020; Witte, 2019). In line with the below statements made by two participants, what could be perceived as a violent response to online threats, could merely be a trivial routine requirement of drillers to maintain their image. As Kit implies, upholding a violent reputation via issuing empty threats does not necessarily mean that the individual has the propensity to commit violent acts. From the field diary, Danny claims below that artist's may carelessly act for attention and publicity on social media, otherwise known as 'clout', rather than to cultivate a violent reputation. Authenticity acquired via threats or flaunting ones wealth can be falsified or exaggerated, devoid of any malicious intent. One artist, Corey, described that his group believes it is 'never too late to change your image', detach from previous violent reputations and start fresh with a 'clean slate'.

Logan*: I'm tryna protect my image, you know what I mean?... that's why certain things I've just gotta ignore it or… there's certain things I need to respond back to because if you keep quiet its gonna mess up your image… but it comes like that part of the game to be honest.*

Kit: *A lot of people that put up a front – the warning front again, the sort of 'stay away from me'… you know that kind of bravado.*

Danny: *just doing it for clout.*

Evidently, members of the drill scene gain different understandings and expectations of what constitutes authenticity. Despite the multitude of ways that authenticity can be achieved; it is important to note that not one participant of this study named violence as an authenticator of drill. While violence and crime may be deemed a crucial element of UK drill to some, drillers could also be labelled as authentic through educating listeners of the raw realities of oppression, by satisfying loyal supporters and remaining true to their past lifestyles, and by protecting their image via *vacant* threats.

The core issue with the complex definition of authenticity within UK drill is that one cannot locate an original example of authenticity with which to verify what lyric is reality and what is performance (Goehr, 2007). The term is constantly negotiated and changing through time and amongst various groups. Hence, there are no fixed methods for law enforcement to follow to correctly authenticate the claims made by drillers, who in some cases, only discuss criminality to enhance fame (Harvey, 2007). Additionally, the emergence of social media has altered the expertise of crime involvement and self-promotion, where users now validate themselves on high-visibility platforms. Drillers may flaunt their wealth, issue threats or brag about their criminal-doings online, all while remaining naïve to the evidence they are generating against themselves in the effort of appearing authentic (Quinn, 2018). As part of the study, one research participant explains:

> Camden: *in music videos a lot of people exaggerate stuff like playing characters or whatever like someone playing a mafia boss or something and they wanna wear a suit and have a gun…– yeah I think not everything should be taken literally so it's a bit- it is it is bias cos the translators can almost spin it so it's – it looks a certain way…Yeah like 'look they've got a gun, look they've got this look they've got that' and then they could just be playing a character…cos some of them are literally on the… block or whatever and showing knives and stuff but some artists they are just – they are like on a high budget and they are on like set and they do have costumes and they all have props and stuff and fake drugs and fake guns or whatever.*

The relationship between performance, crime, and authenticity, according to the above statement by one producer, thus relies heavily on the budget of the drill artist. The more successful the artist, the greater the funding of the music videos and therefore the more authentically criminal they seem via performance. This has altered the nature of performance crime in the digital age and has transformed the way that crime and justice will affect UK drill artists (Surette, 2018). Nevertheless, even if serious depictions of violence are characteristic of the genre, it is often accompanied with cartoonish and comical threats which are easily misinterpreted (Hancox, 2018), as one interviewee supports:

> Danny: *it's a hard one cos lots of times what they're doing is telling the truth to a standard. It's a likelihood they have seen some people get stabbed, there's a likelihood they have seen or held a knife or have seen someone who has held a knife or sold drugs. There's a very likely scenario that has happened, but the fact- I don't think you should get prosecuted for talking about that. You prosecute people for doing crimes, not for talking about crimes.*

As the participant underlines, a better insight concerning authenticity, performance and violence needs to be formed. By doing so, the police, Drill

Music Translation Cadre (DMTC), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and juries should be better equipped to differentiate which lyric is 'glamorising' violence, which is inciting it, and which simply describes it, as well as which 'claims' to authenticity are real or fake (Hancox, 2018). The core characteristics of UK drill that this thesis will now discuss is the concern surrounding authentic drill style (see Appendix 3 for a further discussion), driller personas and UK drill lyrics. It will explore what role authenticity and violence plays in the latter.

4.3 Cultivating violent personas in UK drill

The fabrication of violent personas has been a marker of authenticity within hip-hop since the 1970's (Nichols, 2006). According to McLeod (1999), maintaining said authenticity relies on artists continually associating themselves with the community from which they have derived. In the context of UK drill, achieving self-identity and masculinity is reliant on embodying and representing the crime and violence that plagues both Chicago and London's Brixton (Majors and Billson, 1993). Majors and Billson (1993) refer to these imaginaries as the 'cool pose', seen as an effort by Black males to break the barriers of a restrictive society through cultivating a destructive identity. Problematically, for UK drill artists to escape the poverty-stricken and violent neighbourhoods they reside in, they must ironically immerse themselves in the brutality that is core to the genre (Kubrin, 2005). RoadWorks LDN (2020b), a non-profit education organisation, underscore how a large sum of UK drill artists feel required to assume a fake front as a means of gaining respect, thus riddling the genre with displays of toxic masculinity and perpetuating gang life. The issue with this is how accurately one can decipher whether these personas and threats are explicit, or merely performative. In fact, one producer participant stated during interview that despite drill artists lyrics, this is not indicative of their true character

> Matthew: *I just can't see like a skinny fragile person stabbing or shooting someone… but even again like big men rapping to the thing*

> *and because when I'm talking to them, they're so polite, well-mannered, and well-spoken… so I just can't see them doing that and that's where a lot of these drill rappers are like. They carry themselves so well it's like I can't imagine them doing that.*

Gunther (2008) tends to this question in his paper addressing the role and importance of badness within young Black males. Most relevant is his differentiation between rude boys and criminals within road culture (Gunther, 2008). By way of intimidating song lyrics, speech and dress styles, artists achieve 'badness-honour' and a degree of power (Gunther, 2008: P.g. 352). Gunther's (2008) work uncovered that practicing said badness does not always correlate with artists wanting to participate in criminal actions. In fact, 'rude boys', who arguably resemble several UK drill artists, viewed criminality negatively. Authenticity, dual personas and intimidating lyrics within UK drill music could therefore be about gaining power and reputation, as opposed to being involved in actual violence. While there are undoubtably a number of UK drill artists who are involved in gangs, this thesis stresses that some drillers may have zero ties to criminal lifestyles, despite what their art may suggest. Given that UK drill lyrics and videos are often used as evidence of bad character against artists, we cannot disregard the highly contextualised nature of UK drill and its claims to gang affiliation, drugs, or violence, based simply on a drillers ability to embody an inherently authentic drill persona.

As part of this study, all three artist participants were especially conscious of the answers given regarding their identity and authenticity during interview. While they initially asserted that their drill personas were authentic, they often contradicted their accounts, perhaps unbeknownst to them. For instance, artists expressed sentiments like

> Logan: *people that know me will know I'm just the same as I am in real life and on the screen or whatever you know what I mean… but at the end of the day… but there is two different sides to that.*

This assertion validates that the artist initially perceived his drill and personal identity as intertwined, yet, he confirmed the existence of a second identity. Another artist, Corey, firmly rejected the idea of him possessing a dual identity, asserting “there’s no façade”. He validated these claims through emphasising the consistency of his authenticity:

> Corey*: A lot of it is just tryna get your name poppin out there, make a name for yourself init. Me, I’ve had a name out in these streets since I was about what pffhh thirteen fourteen, I was a rare kid like you didn’t see someone like me…but I was always one of the most like, I had the biggest heart, I was very like a very dangerous person like just something you never saw like everyday, I was a leader, I used to have like twenty people following me.*

Later in the interview, however, the artist surprisingly answered:

> Corey: *No cos like I said before, music is art, it’s a performance, a performer putting on a show in other words. There’s no truth to what they’re sayin.*

Goffman (1956) noted that by demonstrating the routine nature of one’s behaviour and highlighting past experiences and biography, artists are able to make their claims to authenticity more believable to the audience (Vugt, 2020). In addition, the drill artists were hesitant to call their own drill identity a ‘performance’ but were firm in their views that UK drill and other drillers were inherently performative and therefore should not be taken literally (Vugt, 2020; Nichols, 2006). Because a performance implies ‘acting’, meaning false and thus inauthentic, this perhaps explains why these artists were reluctant to insinuate or admit that the personas that they display to their listeners,do not reflect who they truly are off-screen (Green, 2018; Nichols, 2006). During interview, however, one artist did acknowledge the existence of a second identity

> Damien: *the face I have on for my supporters is always not gonna be the same face as my family. Like my supporters are not gonna know my personal life, they won't know my day to day, in their head I'm just waking up and doing everything I'm saying on the songs- they probably don't think I wake up and have a normal day, a cup of tea, eat cereal like they don't probably think I do that, they probably think I just wake up and straight to what's going on in the lyrics. So…you do kind of have two identities.*

Contradictive to the above statement, the participant later stated that if listeners want to "know you as an artist", they should use his music as an accurate source of expertise regarding his life. This perhaps demonstrates that authenticity is ambiguous even amongst those directly involved in the UK drill scene. The various contradictions regarding authenticity by these artists, illustrates the difficulties in deciphering who and what is real or fake, making UK drill an inappropriate source of intel about drillers in a courtroom setting (Quinn, 2018). Even under the conditions of an academic research project and the promise of anonymity, these artists visibly battled with whether they were a 'sell-out', causing them to continuously reconsider their answers as to whether their artist and personal identities were correlative. To aid law enforcement with their analysis of drill, this thesis will look at why and to what lengths drill artists have gone to verify their authenticity.

4.3.1 *Exploiting drillers:* the "misuse" of Black masculinity in UK drill

The notion of Black masculinity is permissive, however, its position in UK drill music can assist in our understanding of performances within the genre (Green, 2018). Cross (1991), signifies that Black adolescent develop feelings of resentment, anger and hostility towards mainstream society and popular culture

upon facing exclusion and oppression due to their race (Cross, 1991; Vaugh, 2012). Due to said racist encounters, the lyrics produced by rappers and drillers alike have become increasingly more rebellious as a marker of Black political power (Richardson and Scott, 2002). As such, the more gangsta, hood, ghetto and hardcore that Black artists act, the more authentic and hence authentically Black they are perceived (Neal, 2012). Engaging in hip-hop culture via performance, manipulation of languages, gestures, and style, therefore authenticates one's Black identity and increases their cultural capital (Clay, 2003. P.g. 1352). Thusly, rappers are progressively more eager to avoid being labelled a 'sell-out', which in turn, causes the performances in UK drill to reflect the destructive caricaturist representations of Black men seen in popular media (Green, 2018). Altering ones true self to appear authentic thusly solidifies the artists place in society and significantly enhances the likelihood of UK drill artists succeeding in the mainstream music industry (Gilroy, 1995). In turn, the (un)willingness of Black artists to emulate destructive markers of authenticity has concurrently made them vulnerable to the influence of dubious record companies (Kitwana, 2011). In particular, White, and affluent males who attain the most powerful positions in the music industry regularly manipulate numerous rappers, via influencing drillers' lyrical content based on their own ideologies (Lynes et al, 2009). Those heavily involved in the music and entertainment industry are, as the Policy Exchange Report (Falkner, 2021: p.g. 7) stated,

> *"offering lucrative record and advertising deals with little regard for the ongoing criminal cases their clients are involved in…. [which] sets an atrocious example to younger generations who are often lacking positive role models… we must consider the consequences of this naïve legitimisation of gang culture"*

In spite of this form of "neo-slavery" (Stallings, 2003) puppeteered at the hands of White music industry executives, rappers, and rap music, and most recently, UK drill(ers), remain the scapegoats of a handful of negative associations to do with crime and gang violence that is allegedly connected to UK drill (Kitwana,

2011; Rose, 2014). From the field diary, Kit highlights the damage to reputation that these violent imaginaries trigger

> Kit: *As soon as your perceived as usually young, Black and violent, then that's all that gets seen*.

In spite of these negative associations, much like with UK drill's predecessors, White society typically accepts rap music once it discovers how to capitalise from it. Street culture, as Ilan (2020) puts it, has since become a key attribute in the culture industries, with Black masculinity and rap becoming increasingly profitable and luring to both artists' and the music industry (Lynes et al, 2020), which could explain why there has been an upsurge in violent UK drill music videos uploaded to social media platforms such as YouTube (Rose, 2014; Amnesty International, 2018; Ryan, 2018b; Edwards, 2019). To illustrate, the gratifying market value of a Black, hyper-aggressive, and hyper-masculine artist exists as an aesthetic drive for both artists and the music industry. This is most evident in the contrast between album covers of folk and rap music (see Appendix 2 for images of album covers). Where folk artists traditionally pose against the backdrop of nature and trees, drillers stand in council estates and demonstrate their pain, lifestyle, or trauma through the covers (see Appendix 2). Record companies skilfully manufacture, construct and market authenticity in a way that will gain views and profit, but unlike folk artists, drillers receive the repercussion for embodying these images.

For artist's who do not fit these descriptions, creating a dual persona is the only option to receive financially lucrative contacts from record labels. During interview, one artist expands on this with his own experiences:

> Logan*: someone wanted to sign me for fifty grand obviously they got at my management –…but we wasn't really keen on it, I was thinking…if I'm signing a deal it has to be proper six figures you na what I mean? … them times there I was a bit kinda going through certain times, I just wanted to do it just for the money you know what I mean?... even certain labels and things like that, they just pick*

certain people and everybody now just wants to sound the same because everyone can rap drill.

The above interpretation given by Logan confirms that during bleak financial periods, artists, and specifically amateurs in the industry with no management or representation, may impulsively accept record deals due to being blindsided by their admiration towards the success of their rap or UK drill idols. Jasmine, a listener, along with six other participants of all three groups, expanded on the issue of amateur drillers

Jasmine: *Umm – the only thing I would say I would change about drill is just amateurs like being very uneducated about the whole purpose of drill. I think a lot of it gets misconstrued people will apply stuff how they want it to be applied to them like they will sort of say 'okay well, he's got a knife so maybe its ok to be spitting bars and having a knife' like no that's not [right] – you know?... upcoming young rappers do associate you know a lot of umm drill music and they bring out knives and guns and all of that stuff into it, but…– they're amateurs and they don't know what drill is – it's actually about the authenticity of drill they miss out on that. Drill is not, to me It's not anything to do with violence.*

A producer, Kyle, expressed similar sentiments

Kyle*: So when you're a young teenager say about my age (18) and you wanna become a rapper, you're not necessarily gonna start rapping like by doing…rap or R&B, drill is what's currently popping right now so they're gonna probably talk about drill…whether they talk about the life that they are actually living or whether they talking about nothing to do with violence at all, no one knows but drill is what's popping right now.*

Other participants mentioned escaping the hood, being unaware of the success of *commercial* UK drill, and following the fashion, as further motives to why

amateurs adopt violent personas (Witte, 2019). Arguably, with the promise of fruitful careers ahead of them, vulnerable start-up drillers may be ignorant to the legal outcomes of their preoccupation with depicting violent personas for their own personal gain (Ilan, 2012; Quinn, 2005).

Ultimately, those employed under the CJS should be encouraged to acknowledge the nuanced nature of violent personas and criminogenic performances in UK drill (Witte, 2019). It could be argued that UK drill personas are more mythical as a promotional device, than they are factual. For instance, album covers dating back to the rap and garage genre's utilising images of tower blocks and the 'streets' as symbolism of creativity, solidarity, and authentic street-life, as opposed to glamorising gang life (Bernstein et al, 2013). The same could be argued regarding UK drill lyrics.

4.4 Fabricating lyrics

UK authorities such as the DMTC and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have placed a substantial focus on drill's lyrics as a source of factual intelligence to secure the incarcerations of those who are implicated, to any degree, in UK drill (Fatsis, 2019; Ilan 2020; Rose, 1994; Alim & Pennycook, 2007). Nonetheless, looking at the lyrics through a literal lens disregards the complex realities of the genre, blurs the lines between fact, fiction, and artistic performance, and improperly assumes that gang violence and drill exist in a vacuum (Ilan, 2020). With the addition of this thesis' interviewee perspectives, this chapter will look at UK drill's lyrical themes via thematic analysis, such as willingness to use violence and inciting harmful behaviour. The aim of doing so is to explore and potentially dilute the argument that UK drill's aim is to incite crime and gang violence (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkey, 2017).

As part of this study, all participants were questioned what inspires UK drill lyrics to highlight how and why context should be acknowledged in our analysis of UK drill. One artist, Logan, responded that his drill lyrics are based on randomness and experiences, such as the "stupidness" he witnesses on the streets, perhaps then discrediting any malicious intent behind his lyrics. The artist then expanded

> Logan *sometimes you rap about… things that lets say we have done, you know what I mean? things that you've been through, maybe that could have happened to you… So sometimes it's not a lie, but sometimes you add on a bit of fictional to it, you know what I mean? It's just all for the hype really.*

Most interestingly, the artist acknowledges the importance of tense in his songs. Specifically, this research study questions whether discussions of violence are an imminent threat if they refer to the artists past, or what *could* have transpired, but did not. Logan later discussed his tendency to fabricate certain lyrics

> Logan: *I won't lie, like obviously I won't lie most of my bars that I rap about are-are-are actually true they're real they're not even lies, but there is certain things maybe you can have a little 10-15 percent where your gonna add.. maybe add little things on there *laughs* you know what I mean? maybe 20% your gonna add on little bits and bobs that just… exaggerates certain parts you know what I mean? to just make it make sense sometimes as punch lines.*

Damien expressed similar thoughts such as his use of metaphors in his lyrics. During interview, the third artist, Corey, named his past experiences that "don't take place anymore" as the muse for his artistic content. Danny and Matthew, two additional participants, named "what artists have witnessed", such as seeing "someone who has held a knife" as a significant influence on UK drill lyrics. Matthew further contends that the artist may also assert "my bro done" within their lyrics, therefore authenticating their ties to the street, but refuting any personal wrongdoing. This leaves the question, should artists be criminalised for rapping about their surroundings or the experiences of others? These responses

validate that UK drill lyrics could be riddled with a mixture of hypothetical scenarios, metaphors, past experiences, first, second and third-person narration and what they have witnessed, but not necessarily participated in, to authenticate their drill identities (Dunbar, 2019). Though these lyrics could aid in our understandings of street life and violence (Kurbin, 2005), it is negligent to decode an art form as if it were a documentary of the artists life, without the recognition of context (Garden Court Chambers, 2021; Quinn, 2018).

4.5 Authenticity within UK drill lyrics

This chapter will now carry out a thematic lyrical analysis to explore the prominent themes within UK drill and their relationship to crime. It will look at 'negative' lyrics, meaning those that would likely be of concern to institutions such as the police for inciting or glamorising violence. The songs vary based on how much police attention they have gained, their level of success and the topics they explore (see Appendix 7 for UK drill lyric content).

As part of this thesis, all participants were asked whether and why drill artists feel inclined to increase their authenticity via discussing their relationship to violence through their lyrics. Both Logan and Damien claimed artists lie about their criminal-ties to try and "get signed", as "they've seen how much money it makes". Producers Evan and Camden expressed similar sentiments, arguing that the genre is now "saturated" with violence by people who want to "get a quick name by saying some crazy things" to maintain their success. The most common answer was that drillers rap about these gritty topics because of the ever-present supply and demand from consumers and the industry for violence (Garden Court Chambers, 2020a). Jasmine commented "They are street wise, but also talented. They know what they are doing to gain success", another participant, Louis, argues "it's making him a lot of money so he's going to keep doing so". George further notes that there is a "pressure" to exert "criminality",

and Danny suggests this image must be maintained as the fans “don’t like change”. Arguably, the less stereotypically authentic and violent a rap artist portrays themselves through their lyrics, the less economically profitable and thus commercially successful they become (Sullivan, 2003).

4.5.1 Willingness to use violence

Strongly tied to authenticating one’s drill persona is how persuasively artists stage their willingness to use violence through their lyrics (Ilan, 2020). One way which this is achieved, as discussed by Vugt, (2020), is how the artist demonstrates their level of comfort with weapon-use. For instance, by writing lyrics like “I don’t lack, don’t slip, long blade on my hip”, or making additional coded references to knives and guns such as “cheffed”, “9”, “ching”, “kweng”, “burner” and “milly”, drillers are able to authenticate their alleged criminal lifestyles, but in turn, gain the scrutiny of law enforcement agencies who claim that this explicit imagery incites acts of violence (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkey, 2017). Still, the perspective that explicit imagery is a catalyst of crime ultimately ignores the merits granted to artists who cultivate the most violent *reputation*, as opposed to those who physically commit violent *acts,* in an economy of street-cultural understanding (Witte, 2019; Hall, 2018, Ilan, 2020). Focussing on the superficial nature of violent lyrics may thusly be a creative tactic by politicians to wholly conceal the root causes of gang and knife crime, such as poverty and mental health (Hall, 2018). Most concerning to this thesis is the reality that UK drill artists who adopt these gang narratives, or “walk the walk” (Nichols, 2006) may have never held a weapon, or been convicted of any crimes (Garden Court Chambers, 2021). In fact, to some, boasting about their alleged possession of weapons, may convince “opps”, or other threats, to reconsider challenging them and prevents violence via displaying symbolic power (Winchester, 2019; Witte, 2019; Hall, 2018). Arguably, decoding UK drill lyrics in a two-dimensional manor

is not capable of uncovering its alleged correlation with crime (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). For instance, lyrics such as “Real talk, man, you have to be careful” and “Aydee got cheffed in the ends times two” could be the artists unconventional approach to educate listeners about the traumatic social realities faced by themselves, or their peers (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkey, 2017; Winchester, 2019).

4.5.2 Taunting rivals

Mocking the performance of industry or *actual* ‘rivals’, is a further tactic present in UK drill lyrics and first came to prominence with the notorious East Coast-West Coast promotional rivalry between rappers such as Tupac and Biggie Smalls (Weiss & McGarvey, 2013). Through taunting others, the drill artist is able to both enhance their authenticity, while simultaneously tarnishing another’s (Stuart, 2020). Troublingly, lyrics like “Turn off the autotune, let’s see how you really rap, send a location” and “That nigga don’t really want beef, who’s copying me? Some silly imposter”, could be misconstrued as texts which are used “specifically to goad, to incite, to provoke [and] to inflame” as Detective Chief Superintendent Kevin Southworth told (Edwards, 2019: n.p.). Yet, engaging in ‘beef’, ‘cross-referencing’, or ‘clashing’ as three participants of this thesis termed it, could be a means for artists to generate popularity and views (Witte, 2019; Stuart 2016; Stuart, 2019). For instance, successful UK drill artists Skengdo and AM, known to be members of ‘410’, and Loski (aka Loose), a driller affiliated with rival gang and drill group the ‘Harlem Spartans’, often participate in clashing. To expand, Skengdo and AM’s heavily scrutinised song ‘Attempted 2.0’ lyrics state “Loose done dashed with the wap, don’t know how I feel about that (Haha), I’m fucking dead. Bitch, just stick to the rap”. The lyrics visibly challenge Loski’s street authenticity via displaying his unwillingness to use a weapon (Trend Cntrl, 2020). It could be argued that these artists are not necessarily seeking to encourage a

violent altercation but are rather fostering an image of driller street authenticity to gain views (Kubrin, 2005; Ilan, 2020). Considering the heightened success of these alleged rival drillers, despite their public disputes, Skengdo and AM move safely in Myatt's Fields, deemed by authorities as the Harlem Spartans/Loski's territory, despite police allegations of imminent violence between the drillers due to the explicit hostility in their lyrics (Kirk, 2020). By taking these taunts and crimino-entreprenerial lyricism as fact, it is effortless to mistakenly ignore the fact-fiction hybridity of the genre (Ilan, 2015).

4.5.3 Authentic driller depictions vs real world violence

When prompted during interview whether drillers displaying a willingness to use weapons and taunting rivals would incite physical violence, six participants from all groups answered 'no', one listener answered 'yes', four insinuated that 'it depends' and two did not provide a response. Jasmine, who answered 'no', stated that the "beauty" of authentic grime and drill is that it does not require "physicality". Anthony further argued that if a violent altercation was to occur due to drill, the song demonstrated that "whatever was gonna be done… was already gonna happen". Artist Corey adheres to this, saying "it just speeds up the retaliation process… but without drill, stuff will happen anyway". Logan further notes "more people will just be sending for each other in tracks instead of really going out there to stab each other" and Camden thought, "the songs come *after* the violence". Although one listener, Louis, believed "I don't think a gang is just gonna sit there and let people think that you're a mug", Damien argued "some people will take [clashing] as a sport", adding that "when I say 'pull him up about it'… it doesn't necessarily mean they're gonna tap him… he might just say 'cool don't do that again'". This is not to say that gang violence in London does not exist, nor that UK drill plays no part in the latter. Nonetheless, we *should* carefully consider the often-innocuous nature of "clashing", "violent" drill

personas, and external factors (i.e., existing gang membership or personal matters) that could also lead to physical violent altercations.

4.6 *Patience is a virtue:* the effects of commercialisation on UK drill

As part of this study, the results from the field diary indicated that the taste for violent lyricism and violent imaginaries within UK drill is perhaps shifting. During interview, eight participants across all groups expressed that exaggerated or fictional claims to stereotypical authenticity, are essentially offensive. In an effort to positively transform how drill is perceived by the public and police, the answers given by drill stakeholders from this study may encourage start-up artists, and other drillers, to avoid adhering to negative stereotypes in their performances in an effort to enhance their fame. In fact, participants expressed this would achieve the opposite. For instance, Danny expressed "I find it quite disrespectful" because "if you're capitalising off a situation that you haven't been in, [you're] capitalising over other people's misery". Kyle further insinuated that disrespecting 'opps' via lyrics, especially those who are deceased, makes drillers deserving of censorship. Logan adheres to this, stating "I'm not gonna lie it's long now init, [lying about this lifestyle] does need to kind of stop cos it's getting ridiculous init, there's a lot of people I've lost like close people [because of my lifestyle]". Contrastingly, two producers, Kit and Camden, thought "but it's what's catchy enough to get them out of the circumstances they are in" and "it's all done to benefit the artist and the people around them, whether or not it's always true". These sentiments evidence that as the demand for violent content has decreased, UK drill becomes more commercialised, diluted and even positive (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). To expand, in a study which analysed the sentiments of 105 London-based drill artists between 2013 to 2018, compared to instances of violent crime in London over the same period, Kleinberg and McFarlane (2019) found no solid relationship between negative drill lyrics and

real-life serious crimes (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). Though UK drill remains to be predominantly negative in its sentiment, it has, in fact, become more positive overtime (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). Specifically, the researchers observed that UK drill music videos with more positive sentiments received twice as many views and engagement on YouTube than those with a negative language sentiment (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2019). During interview, two producers of this thesis, Matthew and Camden, agreed to this, stating that their most successful songs were those that were more commercial, different, and "melodic". This shift from largely negative to positive sentiment trajectories, could be related to the industrialisation of UK drill.

Frith (1981) notes that to a few, the industrialisation of music shifts it from active musical production to passive pop consumption, and thereby strips the commodity of any existence of community, cultural traditions, or public threat. Despite the dilution of its authentic and original sound, it is common for UK drill artists to pursue the lucrativeness of commercial sales, rather than maintaining their artistic integrity or remaining true to their roots (GRM Daily, 2020). Rose (2014) describes this as the commercial takeover, or the White corporation phenomenon of Black complicity, whereby serious or alleged problem music, such as UK drill, becomes standardised (Firth and Goodwin, 2006). This gradual movement from art to commodity and the branching out of UK drill has seen a variety of iterations of the genre, such as R&B drill, singing as opposed to rapping, autotuning, unconventional tempo's and UK drill parody's. Artists of the genre have additionally come to be more diverse, ranging from comedians like Munya Chawawa and his flamboyant character "Unknown P" and aspiring 'drill pensioners', 70-year-old Pete and Bas (Rose, 2020; Keith, 2020). During interview, Kit alluded to how this shift can expand UK drill's audience

> Kit: *that is kind of big for drill rappers and drill artists cos now it takes us out of the lime light for violence and people can say "hey I can show this to my mum now and now she can learn about drill music in a fun way".*

Artist 'RV', described as UK drill's punchline king (Reed, 2021), and UK drill compadre, Headie One (Patterson, 2020) are good examples of the success that can be acquired when artists adhere to the guidelines of commercialisation. Their triumphant 2018 song 'Know Better' was enjoyed by the masses, accumulating tens of millions of views worldwide and eventually earned its deserved position on the radio and established their careers (Patterson, 2020). In an article written by Vice, RV asserted "it shows that drill music is for everyone to enjoy, but not for everyone to understand" (Bassil, 2020).

As part of this study, participants from all groups made comments regarding the commercialisation of UK drill. In particular, the field diary revealed that both UK drill artists, listeners and producers agreed that the genre required this change. See below for examples of what UK drill stakeholders said regarding this topic:

Listeners

> Anthony: *I'm kind of fed up of the saturation of this violent sound…if the whole genre elevates and it's in the charts…people can see they don't have to start with this raw gritty hard-hitting sound.*

Artists

> Corey: *I'm done with all of that. With the music I'm making now, I want young kids to like my music, especially girls. Girls buy music. If you make music for these guys they don't buy fuck all.*

Producers

> Evan*: I've been trying to make something new cos it's getting' a bit saturated and you're hearin' the same things over and over, like, violence… it's well White now.*
>
> Camden: *a lot of people are experimenting with like drill elements of like a drill beat and then maybe putting it over some happy guitars… in the next few years the genre is gonna probably expand and it's gonna be less about the actual where it came from and more just about the sound of it.*

As UK drill's popularity and audience has grown across various commercial platforms, in 2020, Sky News reported a significant drop in crime and gang life (Sky news, 2020; Gillespie, 2020). Logically, the parallel would be occurring in regard to crime statistics if UK drill were to have such a negative influence on its audience. The comments made as part of this thesis, however, display how there is perhaps less demand for the niche violent sound that UK drill once was.

George explains why UK drill is becoming more commercial

> George: *I feel like the new stuff it's like, it's not so much as niche as what it was when they were producing it for their like original listeners. Whereas now it's like they've got to watch what they say to appeal to the wider audience.*

Danny posed an important question for this thesis in his argument that the police may misinterpret drill songs based on their purpose, stating

> Danny: *So yeah it's the difference between the singles and the actual album, so obviously singes are gonna be bangers because they are meant for clubs…they are meant to get people hyped. They also make other songs [in albums] that are a bit more personal.*

To expand on these answers, if we are to learn anything from UK drill's predecessors, it is that alleged problem Black music will inevitably become customarily usurped and abandoned as a genre that was concerned with images of authenticity and the gritty realities of life on the streets (Rose, 1991; Hari, 2015; Blackman, 2004; Shapiro, 1999). Perhaps, agencies of law enforcement should consider evaluating the historical process in which *'dangerous'* music almost always becomes of less political and legal concern through time. For instance, it was once considered a political statement to wear an NWA t-shirt. Today, the commodity is mass produced and sold across various clothing websites to those who are unaware of its former meaning. Danny's earlier statement suggests that, perhaps, there are instances when the DMTC may be incorrectly focussing on less commercial drill singles as intel, which are not a consistently accurate testament to the artists true characters. Moreover, Damien

provides reason as to why police bodies should refrain from criminalising artists who are making the organic 'slow transition' from a violent authentic driller striving for views, to a popular, adaptable, marketable, and therefore less radicle driller. Afterall, patience is a virtue.

Commercialisation is perhaps a more effective and discreet means of monitoring music such as UK drill. In fact, continually criminalising and censoring drillers based on the characters that they display or gritty lyrics they create, may only be steering them further into deviating the frustrating restrictive regulations placed upon them and their music (Garden Court Chambers, 2020b). As Damien and Logan suggested during interview, to avoid any form of negative outcomes of the performances of authenticity exemplified in this chapter, drillers should educate listeners on the difference between reality and art by talking in schools, doing more interviews, or creating more disclaimers, to "show people you're not that guy that everybody describes". Overall, though, this chapter argues that the complex criminogenic scenarios and violent driller personas depicted in drill are not literal to the extent that the genre content could be justly employed as evidence of bad character or gang affiliation against UK drill stakeholders.

4.7 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter answered that criminogenic scenarios and driller personas depicted in drill are not entirely literal. The data identified a new typology and guideline for authenticity in UK drill, which acted as a guideline for success, being true to one's self and to the spirit of the drill genre. It further evidenced how music industry executives profit from drillers craftily creating violent personas and caricaturist depictions of black masculinity, to gain power, success, and reputation, despite such depictions causing police scrutinization and negative interactions with law enforcement. It later highlighted the hesitancy of artists to admit to fabricating their personas to support their claims to

authenticity, however, they acknowledged how this is a common practice within drill, thus, such convincing performances make drill inappropriate as evidence of one's bad character. The chapter demonstrated how artist participants frequently employed metaphors, fabricate and lyrics and participate in the sport of 'clashing'. Nonetheless, the chapter highlighted that participant's did not believe UK drill to be the sole or a large contributing factor in real world violence. Finally, it found that despite the harsh censorship and criminalisation of UK drill, commercialisation is in fact playing a key, restrained and natural role in standardising the genre into a socially digestible art form.

Chapter 5: *The value of drill:* the making and use of a vilified genre

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore and analyse the multitude of values that stem from the UK drill music genre. It will draw on the work of criminological and psychological theorists, UK drill lyrics, and the data gained via semi-structured interviews with UK drill consumers, artists, and producers. The chapter will seek to critique and challenge the stereotypes of UK drill to allow space for the recognition of the valuable qualities of the UK drill genre, emotionally, physically, financially and via desistance. Notably, the 'Ban Drill' debate (McCourt, 2020) has been of political, police and media concern in recent years regarding the genres disputed relationship to the coincidental rise with recent upsurges in knife crime, with arguments stating that UK drill glamorises and encourages violence through its lyrical content (Rymajdo, 2020; Bibly et al, 2014). In this chapter there will be a focus on UK drill music's advantageous attributes: firstly, the positive messages situated in UK drill lyrics, secondly, listening to UK drill and its positive affect on consumers, thirdly, the therapeutic and cathartic elements of making drill music, and finally, UK drills relationship to opportunity, success, and desistance. The chapter will present the voices and experiences of drill listeners, producers, and artists and will answer the final research question of this research study: "will the consequences of criminalisation actually prevent criminal behaviour?".

5.2 *Positive drill messages:* a desire to leave the lifestyle

This chapter will look at UK drill lyrics which incorporate positive lyrical themes to demonstrate the intentions of the genre (see Appendix 7 for UK drill lyric

content). A desire to leave the lifestyle is an important theme to recognise when analysing UK drill lyrics. Because of how drill has been stereotyped and stigmatised, the researcher realises the importance of altering this negative outlook. Accounting for positive themes shifts the intent of drill lyrics which describe violence, drugs, or other so-called 'harmful' topics, to how the artist actually *feels* about these situations. That is, could it be argued that artists are 'inciting' or 'glamorising' life on the streets, or is the latter a distorted cry for help (Garden Court Chambers, 2021; Quinn, 2018). Lyrics such as "Hear the doorbell ring and your heartbeat lag. Can't keep track, been in the trap. It's hard, I can't keep up selling them party drugs", "And I really had enough of this sh*t (I had it) Man, I really had enough of this lifestyle, so right now still tryna get rich", "Everyone got PTSD", "street traumas been a fucker" and "I hope you never end up in these surroundings" are blatant depictions of life on the streets (i.e. drugs, violence and trauma) as a burden, and something in which the artist does not wish on their listener's. As part of this research study, George commented on his view of these kinds of lyrics

> George*: [censorship means the artist] now might not be able to give those examples of the crimes he committed in earlier life to then be like "look for the youths in London, yeah don't follow my footstep look where it got me" kind of thing.*

During interview, Logan expressed similar sentiments of his aim to motivate, encourage and inspire his audiences

> Logan: *I just hope that [listeners] can be…encouraged and motivated by it so that I can motivate them and inspire them so that they can do it [and succeed] as well. To show them that anyone can do drill [no matter their past]*

Arguably, by recounting their raw and menacing stories of loss of loved ones, remaining active 'in the trap' and its related trauma, UK drillers are able to present their realities as the antonym of their dreams. More attention should be placed upon assisting those who are crying for help through their lyrics, even if

these cries are obscure. Although themes of violence are evident within UK drill songs, if not taken out of context, the lyrics in their entirety do not often express a love or want for their circumstances to persist. Thus, categorising all UK drill as a genre which glamorises death and drug-selling is an erroneous and faulty generalisation.

5.2.1 *Informative:* a distrust in the police

Martinez (1997) identified rap music as an African American popular cultural form and a kind of oppositional culture which commonly discusses a general 'distrust of the police'. This often involves discourse surrounding experiences of police racism and the subsequent effect this has on Black rappers and drillers, their families, and communities. Though what may be perceived as UK drillers outright challenging authority figures through their lyrics, could instead be a source of intelligence which draws awareness to the senseless and racially motivated censorship of UK drill and its creators. For instance, UK drill lyrics like "I got war with my own feds", "Every time I see the jakes, I sprint (Dash), 'cah the pigs just wanna tell a nigga he's nicked", "The Feds ain't dumb, they know wagwan" and "Officer, why won't you let me be?", exemplify the lack of trust that drillers have of those who have sworn to protect them. UK drill could be classed as a vehicle for political resistance against racial inequality and institutional racism in the United Kingdom, by evidencing the historically thorny relationship between the police and Black musicians (Nielson, 2012). Arguably, these protest-fuelled anthems may act as a cultural glue which cultivates communal resistance amongst racially oppressed individuals. This thesis encourages the police not just to listen, but to educate themselves on UK drill lyrics and its context and build relationships with Black communities, rather than "suppress, criminalise and marginalise their voices" (Reidy, 2020: P.g. 11)

We should, thus, not observe UK drill through a lens which deems the genre to be exclusively misogynist, antisocial, and violent. UK drill should be simultaneously seen as a tool for aspiring drillers and listeners to express their creativity, cry for help and as a source of intelligence regarding institutional racism. UK drill could therefore symbolise the means to escape from crime, rather than being a catalyst for it (Buditu, 2020). In fact, the latter aspects of UK drill could yield a positive effect on consumers.

5.3 A psychological analysis of music and positive influence

Throughout the thesis, it has shown that music can enable listeners to feel powerful emotions that remedy their social realities (Lozon and Bensimon, 2014). UK drill music has nonetheless encountered a disproportionate level of stigma from the media and the police based on its presumed connection to gang crime and drug consumption (Ilan, 2020; Fatsis, 2019). As a result, little attention has been paid to the opinion of UK drill stakeholders and the multitude of benefits that listening to the music provides for them. Thus, exploring the research surrounding other alleged 'problem genres' and its influence on listeners could aid in fighting against the censorship of UK drill music (McCourt, 2020). As part of this research study, listeners were asked about the drill music that they listen to and its subsequent impact on them. Notably, and the reasoning behind this chapter, the answers given by all six listeners predominantly discussed the emotional and psychological benefits gained from listening to UK drill, which will now be explored.

Miranda's (2012) work on the role of music in young psychosocial development displayed that music listening can be beneficial in several aspects (Jensen, 1999). The latter aspects, as this chapter will argue, are most accurately determined by those who are directly involved in or influenced by UK drill. Interviewing UK drill listeners on their consumption is thus invaluable to construct accurate

conceptions of UK drills impact, as opposed to merely focussing on its probative value (Roberts et al, 2009). From the field diary, all listener participants described how frequently they consumed UK drill. Answers ranged from listening "a bare minimum of three [to] four times a day", "every day" or at least "once to twice a week", with some asserting that despite their high level of UK drill consumption, they are "personally more into grime", or "don't follow it like major major". These responses indicated that not all UK drill fans consider themselves to be part of a UK drill music subculture, and hence all that it is associated with. As the concept of Neo-tribes would imply, the cultural appetites of contemporary UK drill listeners are arguably more fleeting and fluid than what the police, Drill Music Translation Cadre (DMTC) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) consider them to be (Bennett, 1999; Bennett, 2005). Ergo, using one's interest in or relationship to UK drill as a means of proving guilt by association or joint enterprise, becomes a gross misjudgement of modern UK drill consumers. But while several aspects of UK drill are irrefutably unhealthy, there needs to be space to recognise the valuable aspects of this popular cultural form (Smith, 2018).

Research regarding the adverse effects of music on consumers, specifically rap music, have made connections between listening to rap music and deviance amongst young people, while others have argued the contrary. For instance, undesirable behavioural and emotional effects experienced from listening to rap music could allude to a causal relationship (Miranda, 2012). Those who analyse the adverse outcomes of listening to problem music should therefore be careful to differentiate which came first, the music or the violent dispositions (Tatum, 1999). With this in mind, scholars and other individuals interested in UK drill music's effect on consumers should not disregard the positive impact that young people's favourite songs can have on them, regardless of the stigmas or alarms tied to it (Reidy, 2020). During interview, two listener participants highlighted the value that they believed can be obtained via listening to UK drill music

George: *I feel like that glamorous lifestyle is definitely going to have a positive effect on their listeners because they're idolising the positive aspects of their music.*

Anthony: *it affects your mood, but I actually think it's definitely more of a positive than a negative.*

Given that there is little research on the link between listening to UK drill and adverse behaviour, these statements and study invite conversations about UK drill's positive impact through listening to optimistic stories of driller success. Music, in this sense, should be viewed as an intellectual, artistic, and cultural tool, due to its influence in several major areas of development: identity formation, emotion, optimising development, regulation and coping, personality and motivation (Miranda, 2012. P.g 11; Vaughn, 2012; Clay, 2003; DeCarlo, 2005; Erikson, 1964; Gold et al, 2004; Hargreaves, 1986). If this is plausible in music's beneficial effects on the listener, then UK drill music should be viewed as a useful mechanism and refuge for the genre's demographic, young Black Britons (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020; Mental Health Foundation, 2019). To expand, Black, Minority and Ethnic (BAME) communities experience unprecedented discrimination and social and economic inequalities. Thus, listening to UK drill music as a raw reflection of these realities could be a healthy method of processing feelings of anger and exclusion experienced by the UK drill music demographic (Sharman and Dingle, 2015; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). One research participant explains how the relatability of UK drill lyrics has helped him process his shared feelings of anger and exclusion

Danny: *I think it's like 'oh I have a way to get away from things' and even if you listen to it, it kind of takes you out the moment so like – it's hard to explain but yeah it's just relatable and it makes you feel like you're heard so basically like your point of view is being shared.*

This statement supports the outlook that music can promote musical relatedness between peers and also nurture students' ability to maintain resilience and thrive creatively in educational settings (Miranda, 2012). Furthermore, music-

based prevention and intervention initiatives for youth have indicated additional benefits through promoting reflective and critical thinking, encouraging connectedness and identity formation (Gold et al, 2004; Jones et al, 2004; MacDonald et al, 2006; Miranda and Gaudreau, 2011; Vaughn, 2021; McCourt, 2020). Namely, Ciaran Thapar, youth-worker, activist, and founder of RoadWorks, utilises UK drill music as a powerful tool to have dialogue with at-risk young people. UK drill could thereby assist social work practitioners as a helpful tool to connect with young listeners and inform modern youth work (McCourt, 2020; Vaughn, 2012: 68).

5.3.1 UK drill and positive effect on consumers

Mainstream research (Miranda, 2012; North and Hargreaves, 2008) surrounding music and youth development often supports the idea that excessive exposure to so-called 'problem music' (i.e., heavy metal and rap) featuring controversial themes (i.e., violence and drug consumption), correlate with external anti-social behaviours and occasionally depression amongst youth (Lozon and Bensimon, 2014). A 2009 meta-analysis study led by Gold et al (2009), however, contests this, proposing a dose effect by which exposure to numerous music therapy sessions with emotional, social, and motivational components, correlated to fewer adverse symptoms among clients. With consideration of these findings, participants of this research study were questioned as to whether or how UK drill, established as an alleged 'problem' genre due its dark lyrical themes, impacted their physical and mental health. One participant explained

> Danny: *I struggle with mental health issues so having that music is sort of like an escape to me and…it makes me feel concentrated as well like I don't just go into my brain then I have something I can listen to, I can relate to and just something nice to do and it's simple and it kind of just takes you outside of the world for a second or a few*

minutes like you still have to deal with real life shit but at least you've got that little escape to help you kind of thing.

Danny's answer suggests that UK drill is valuable in its ability to remedy negative experiences and feelings held by the consumer, based on the drillers' degree of relatability to its listeners. Furthermore, additional studies (Baker and Bor, 2008; Hargreaves, 2008; Gardstom, 1999) have noted that exposure to such *aggressive* songs were only found to reinforce prime aggressive behaviours and antisocial thoughts *if* these behavioural tendencies were pre-existing, particularly in already vulnerable youth, suggesting that consuming alleged 'problem music' is perhaps an indication and reflection of emotional vulnerability, as opposed to the cause. As part of this research study, numerous participants commented on this

Anthony: *you're already gonna be in a mood I think if it's gonna effect you. You're gonna already be affected if that makes sense, you're gonna already have a certain mindframe before drill could have a further impact…I don't think it's ever a cause I think it's only ever an amplifier.*

As Anthony states, drill consumers who engage in criminal behaviour may do so due to external factors that are unrelated to the music. In fact, Kyle believed that listening to raw and gritty stories of London street-life via UK drill music can act as a valuable means of deterring listeners from replicating the stereotypical and *authentic* 'driller' lifestyle, as opposed to encouraging them to mirror this adverse behaviour

Kyle: *I've seen positions where artists who are rapping about certain things who do live that life, I see what happens to them going to jail, some rappers end up dead and I feel as if 'look at what they're doing, they're rapping about this, the streets catch up with them', I don't wanna live like that and I don't feel anyone else should be living like that so.*

Gardstrom (1999) refers to this as 'The Drive Reduction theory', where, for listeners facing pre-existing internal pressure and challenging feelings such as rage or anxiety, music acts as conduit which promotes physical, verbal, and emotional catharsis to ultimately *prevent* an emotional or physical outburst (Arnett, 1992). Music, which is categorised as raw, aggressive, and authentic, can hence provide a therapeutic effect for listeners. Various young listeners in the study expressed sentiments towards this style of music, such as "…it takes me from a bad mood to a good mood" and "It slows me down when I'm upset. I don't think it creates a negative impact" (Gardstrom, 1999. P.g. 218). According to Arnett's (1991) research on heavy metal music consumption and reckless behaviour amongst our youth, those who abide by the drive reduction theory depict music as a 'vicarious release of aggression', and a 'tranquiliser'. In spite of the discriminative view held by the police that UK drill encourages crime, the data for this proposition is still elusive and Gardstrom's theoretical groundwork thus counters this argument (Edwards, 2019; Dare, 2019).

An additional psychological study on music therapy conducted by Sharman and Dingle (2015) focussed on extreme metal music's influence on anger processing. The study used 39 listeners aged between 18 and 34 years whose emotions were measured both subjectively and via their heartrate on the positive and negative affect scale. The results were gained via conducting an anger exercise, then ten minutes of either silence or the choice to listen to their own 'extreme music', defined as chaotic, loud, heavy, and powerful sounds with emotional vocals. Following the anger exercise, the participants were found to have increased levels of irritability, hostility, and stress, shown by an increased heart rate. Interestingly, these feelings dramatically decreased when followed by silence or listening to their choice of extreme music. Sharman and Dingle's (2015) findings indicated that 'extreme' music matched the participants physiological arousal and encouraged positive feelings, rather than making them angrier.

Similar findings were drawn from this research study when participants were questioned how listening to UK drill affected their mood and behaviour. Given that the UK drill genre is regularly criticised for having a "direct correlation" with

"shootings and stabbings on the street", as Detective Chief Inspector Jim Mckee stated, this study deemed it crucial to explore the physical and emotional effects and consequences of said lyrics (Edwards, 2019: P.g. 1). Though these outcomes may be specific to those to which the threats are aimed at in the lyrics, these demonstrative statements fail to recognise the benefits of listening to drill. Several accounts during interview were as follows:

> Anthony: *when I wanna go and keep the energies up and yeah just tryna get through stuff.*
>
> Danny: *Oh mate it clears out your head. You listen to it when you're angry and it gets you out of it because it makes you release that energy.*
>
> George: *yeah like it's definitely a way to get rid of my anger and vent and act like a therapy.*

Evidently, these participants utilised UK drill music as a means to regulate their mood, thus further supporting the genre's position as both a valuable and beneficial to the drill consumer. Continuing from Sharman and Dingle's study (2015), it was found that if the level of arousal in the song matches the listeners internal arousal, this suggests the music enables the listener to understand and process their emotional state. The scholars found that music containing themes of aggression not only reduced the level of anger felt by the listener, but also that these extreme genres enabled them to fully understand the anger (79%), thus resulting in the ability to self-regulate and calm down (69%). For those who enjoyed extreme music, listeners expressed listening to it to increase feelings of happiness (87%) and well-being (100%). Debatably, these results contradict the assertions that extreme music will cause or promote negative aggressive behaviour, such as acts of retaliation against gang rivals. Instead, fans of this 'extreme' music, such as UK drill, perhaps use these highly arousing beats and lyrics to benefit them psychologically, emotionally, and physically (Sharman and Dingle, 2015; Gardstrom, 1999; Lozon and Bensimon, 2014). One participant of this research study supports this conclusion:

> George*: If [I'm] feeling down or if I'm angry I sometimes to drill music because I feel I'm able to- I share their kind of their anger they sometimes put into their music so by listening to that it takes it away from me so I could say it helps be release anger.*

If this could be generalisable to audiences of so-called 'problem' or 'extreme' music such as UK drill, then listeners experiencing anger or emotional adversities should then be met with empathy and support, as opposed to censorship and discriminatory politics that could trigger counterproductive effects such as alienation and a reluctance to seek help (Williams and Clarke, 2018; Ilan, 2020). The findings drawn from both psychological work and the participants of this this research study are testament to the positive impact that stigmatised music can have on the consumer. In addition, reasons to why and how often listeners engaged with drill varied between the participants of this study. This may show that consuming to UK drill is simply just people listening to music that benefits them in whatever way they need it to (Bennett, 1999; Bennett, 2005). As McCourt states, "My argument is that ignoring or disallowing listening to drill is less effective in supporting young people than listening with them and inviting understanding and productive conversation" (McCourt, 2020: P.g. 1). In addition to UK drills benefits for its consumers, this study found that the making of the genre is also undeniably valuable for the creators of UK drill, such as drill producers and artists.

5.4 *Therapy in the trap:* the positive impact of music making

"Therapy in the trap" is a term devised by the non-profit music education organisation, RoadWorks (2020b), to describe song writing as a therapeutic response to feeling 'trapped' in adverse and violent situations, specifically for those who are unable or unwilling to access talking therapies. This chapter explores a range of themes related to the positive cultural and social impact of

the drill music genre which has been elicited from the gaps in existing literature and research regarding UK drill, this study deemed it crucial to explore the potential positive influences of UK drill for those who are being censored, i.e., the creators of the genre. To achieve this, the researcher questioned both UK drill artists and producers on how writing and producing drill affected how they feel. Throughout the interview process and once data analysis was complete, it became evident that UK drill creators benefited greatly from their contribution to the genre, which ought to be discussed if UK drill is to steer away from its existing derogative label, regarding its connection to drugs and gangs. UK drill may alternatively, or simultaneously, be a constructive means to process and release emotion, or to simply do something that these individuals are passionate about.

With the threat of censorship and incarceration looming over UK drill creators, as well as the recent collapse of supportive interventions for vulnerable young people to access, it is unsurprising that UK drill creators involved in illicit lifestyles are reluctant and unable to seek help (YMCA, 2020). Cuts to youth services and centres, including leisure, sporting, enrichment activities and targeted provisions have seen a significant decline within the past decade by virtue of cuts to government funding (Reidy, 2020; Dearden, 2018; Amrani, 2018). Accordingly, informative resources and safe spaces for vulnerable young people that provide a sense of belonging and to discuss issues and experiences related to drug and alcohol misuse, dysfunctional home environments, gang affiliation and mental health, have become progressively sparser (Weale, 2020). The YMCA chief executive, Denise Hatton, stated “Without drastic action to protect funding and significantly reinvest in youth services, we are condemning young people to become a lonely, lost generation with nowhere to turn” (Weale, 2020: n.p). During interview, one drill artist sympathised

> Damien: *in my young days I had like youth clubs to go to and in the youth clubs and studio groups every week so I’m attending that and that’s keeping me focused cos I really wanna do music now cos they’ve brought it into our community, they’re assisting us with it.*

As a successful UK drill artist himself, this statement indicates that having access to safe spaces can nurture a productive and creative attitude for young people. But, per the recent decrease of safeguarding approaches and an upsurge in punitive interventions by the very institutions that are supposed to protect our young people, it is understandable why this demographic is 'venting' about the traumatic, violent, and negative events that they have experienced, through safe narrative exercises, such as lyric writing and creating music.

5.4.1 *Producer perspective:* benefits of producing drill beats

When queried what impact producing UK drill beats had on the producer participants of this study, all responses were related to feelings of happiness, pride, and excitement, amongst others. As Kang and Williamson (2013) notes, research has proved that music is important to people, but does not often offer an answer to why, especially for those who create it, and especially for music that is deemed inappropriate (Caffrey, 2021). Music is, nonetheless, inextricably linked with our deepest reward systems, and one producer answers *why* this is

> Matthew*: when I find something that – it can be the smallest thing- that I've done different and I get a bit creative and energetic over it and I get a mad buzz over it and it's like now I want the whole world to hear this, I want my friends to hear what I've done and I want the artist to hear this and I want them to show the world what I've done and help someone clock what I've done literally. So it's like yeah it's a crazy feeling to have.*

It is amply clear, as established in the previous chapter, that drill beats are a crucial element of the UK drill genre. Thus, using one's artistic and creative skills to produce such a core component of the genre can be a meaningful and purposeful accomplishment to these artistic individuals, as the former

participant has acknowledged. From the field diary, an additional producer expands on the therapeutic attributes of developing UK drill beats

> Camden: *your minds gonna be in a lot different place cos it's almost a bit therapeutic when you're making music like you can get out a lot of your frustrations and you can express yourself a lot better than rather if you're on the street getting into trouble with someone over a situation or something like that…I feel that if I have made something really good then I'll be proud of myself and I do feel creative, that's kind of how I express myself.*

As this research participant explains, engaging in arts-based activities, specifically for those with turbulent realities, seems to act as a safe and beneficial outlet for one's emotions. Producers are therefore using drill production as a replacement of therapy and support that they do not otherwise receive, and are using recording studios as their safe space, due to a lack of youth centres. With these studios and the individual's drive to prosper combined, drill producers are creating their own opportunities and careers in the face of an educational curriculum which avoids healthy methods of creative expression for those who are less academic, and a government system which frequently neglects the needs of vulnerable youth (Travis, 2013; Caffrey, 2021). Comments made during interview as part of this study did not only uncover the benefits of creating UK drill for producers, but also for its artist's.

5.4.2 *The other side to 'badness':* lyric writing and catharsis

The DMTC and police alike have, at times, lacked the capacity to distinguish 'badness' and Black music subcultural dynamics, to confessions of actual criminality within UK drill lyrics (Gunther, 2008; Blackman, 2014). This thesis pushes for an improved approach, whereby the violent lyrical discourse located

in UK drill is interpreted through a more constructive and optimistic lens. To expand, Ciaran Thapar, founder of the social and musical educational school 'RoadWorks', stresses how 'Drillosophy', the function of looking at reality through a theoretical lens via the school's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of 'Catharsis', can be used as 'therapy in the trap' for young artists, and hence provide a framework for storytelling in UK rap and UK drill music (RoadWorks, 2020b). In this respect, storytelling (lyric writing) and music therapy can be applied as a means of purgation/purging negative thoughts and emotions for the artist by way of revisiting their own or others' stories through the first or third-person narrative. In this chapter, to avoid the medicalisation of the term, 'purging' or 'purge' will be used in conjunction with cleansing, reconciling, and ridding the individual of unwanted feelings.

The concept of purging as a method of reducing aggressive behaviour or emotions has been of scholarly interest for some time (Gentile, 2013; Pennebaker and Seagal, 1999; Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker and Beall, 1986; Krantz and Pennebaker, 1995; Clark, 1993). To Aristotle and Freud, catharsis is achieved through harmless exercises by means of writing about tragedy and provoking feelings of pity and fear, to balance built-up emotions and subsequently reduce mental distress (Feshbach, 1984; Krantz and Pennebaker, 1995). The latter is central to Freuds concept of psychoanalysis and Breuer's 'cathartic method', whereby written expression, such as writing lyrics, is held as key to the writers ability to bring repressed painful memories to consciousness. Through constructive methods, the writer is ideally able to adequately understand and address their trauma to yield physical and mental improvements, yet it cannot guarantee that writing lyrics will inhibit adverse effects (Pennebaker, 1997; Bushman et al, 1999; Bushman, 2002; Baron and Scullin, 2013). In the context of UK drill, the action of expressing one's traumatic, violent, or criminal experiences through lyrical discourse becomes not an action of inciting or glamorising violence, but more a therapeutic tool or want of escapism from the realities of inner-city life. As part of this research study, every artist participant conversed about the power of lyric writing

> Logan: *To be honest with you, it's just like… to me writing lyrics is like a therapy session to be honest… you na' what I mean? Sometimes when I'm stressed doing it, it just keeps my mind off a lot of things.*
>
> Damien*: It's like a, it's like a form of expression like... It's like your thoughts coming out and you're putting them down… I think writing lyrics, I wouldn't say it's my only way but it's probably my main way and it's probably the best way of my expression to be honest… because I've had like… me personally I've probably had like many hard times and rough times and I just think 'you know what let me just crack on with my music and get on with music' and like I'll put all that pain and stress and anger into writing down – writing down the lyrics so it kinda…so I write the lyrics based off what I'm feeling in that moment.*

One artist answered as if directly speaking to those who endeavour to censor and criminalise UK drill music and its artists. Unbeknownst to these individuals, or perhaps just viewed as an insufficient excuse to talk about crime, gangs and drugs, UK drill lyric writing exists as a method for some to healthily vent their emotions in the only way they know how

> Corey*: Let us use what we've got and what we've always known to make it better for ourselves, cos you wanna live better like there's a lot of people where I'm from, all they've known is tragedy and sadness and struggle and pain.*

In line with the comments made by this study's research participants, a meta-analysis study conducted by psychological theorist Pennebaker (1997) and colleagues in Texas, supported the writing paradigm as an exceptionally powerful tool for both physiological and physical benefits. It was shown that encouraging the participant to write for 20 minutes per day for several days regarding trauma-related feelings (ranging from experiences with death to survivors of abuse), provoked improved psychological well-being and self-reported health and immune responses (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker, 1993; Pennebaker and

Seagal, 1999; Pennebaker and Beall, 1986). Although these exercises did not lead to immediate reductions in stress, the outcomes did support that purgation generated significant long-term benefits and improved the participants ability to cope with traumatic events through applying meaning, impact, and insight to their experiences. The rationality behind these findings was that writing enables the participant to take a controlled and structured approach to talking about their experiences, in a way that they were not able to do whilst they were experiencing it (Clark, 1993). From the field diary, Corey clarifies how his drill lyrics help both him and his listeners understand the impact of and cope with traumatic events such as death

> Corey: *I'm comfortable I'm at ease init when I'm writing lyrics it's just in the zone, nothing else really matters in that moment… Literally literally, one of my friends died the other day God rest his soul, I literally wrote I just started writing something to just try and pinpoint around that, around death and how people cope with it differently and how it effects mothers, siblings, children, who group up without their fathers or mothers, you get it?*

This statement further supports that written exercises, such as creating lyrics, could reinforce comparable emotional and therapeutic benefits for UK drill artists, who's songs often explore themes of trauma, death, crime, and general happenings of life on the streets. Thus, as the previous studies have displayed, this chapter uncovers a strong consensus that the power and process of writing needs not to be underestimated by the police and the DMTC (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker, 1993; Pennebaker and Seagal, 1999; Pennebaker and Beall, 1986; Clark, 1993; Bushman, 2002; Baron and Scullin, 2013; Fatsis, 2019; Roadworks, 2020a; Roadworks, 2020b; Roadworks, 2020c). Parallel to the interpretations held by critics of UK drill, lyrics containing graphic and unpleasant themes could perhaps serve as an alternative form of therapy for a demographic whom more conventional forms of therapy are not as accessible, as opposed to being a purposeful and calculated means to glamorise and incite violence. That is, how can the police, in circumstances of using UK drill lyrics as evidence of bad

character or joint enterprise, blame drillers for illustrating their environment? During interview, Damien further elaborated on this issue

> Damien: *you can fault someone for doing drill music but what if he wasn't doing drill music? What would he be doing? Have you got another option for him? And I think that's one thing that's not really fair because you want young people to not do drill but what's the next option for them? What will you replace for them to do? What's gonna keep them busy that they can actually enjoy and that can change their lives?*

Damien's comments illustrate the struggle faced by those who fall victim to the censorship of their only creative and emotional outlet. This has not, however, caused UK and U.S. drillers to abandon discussing dark topics in their lyrics. This has been evidenced through UK drill music songs such as Ambush's song 'Eastenders', which addressed the tragic events that have derived from trivial matters between men as a result of pride, jealously, love and hate (Musixmatch, 2020c; Roadworks, 2020b). Krept and Konan additionally expressed raw emotions through their track 'My Story', whereby Konan discusses guns, blood and being "trapped in a nightmare" in his incredibly personal and vivid account as a victim of a home invasion, in which his stepfather was murdered (Musixmatch, 2020b; Roadworks, 2020b). Lastly, Knuck's song and music video 'Home' discusses and re-enacts how the main character has witnessed someone being violently stabbed at a party. The lyrics cite how the main character vomits whilst running away from the scene of the crime, thus bravely evidencing a level of fear, vulnerability, and anxiety to a demographic of listeners who feel pressured to uphold an authentic masculine and driller persona (Green, 2018; Weitzer and Kubrin, 2009). UK drillers undeniably discuss worrying and violent scenarios to its listeners within the lyrics. Nonetheless, though this is not the case for all UK drill songs, they do not always describe it with great joy, excitement, or with intent for their listeners to replicate said scenarios (Musixmatch, 2020a; RoadWorks, 2020b). In fact, participants of this research

study conveyed their admiration for artists who explore these topics and display emotion

> Anthony: *I like variance so when I do see people tryna take it to another level and take it away from the raw sound that we know… we enjoy it from time to time.*
>
> Danny: *yeah definitely it shows both sides of the story then and it also makes- especially since like men how mental health and stuff is kind of talked down so when you see these people from a similar area as you who are meant to be tough people and that, getting vulnerable, talking about their emotions, talking about the problems where they come from, it gives people a chance to relate to it and people who you wouldn't expect to…I think it's quite important in drill because of the stigma behind it and lots of people don't realise the other side of the badness.*

As these participants allude to, UK drill may provide "opportunities for emotional reflection within a harsh, masculinist culture; and a sense of accomplishment" (Lines, 2020: P.g. 1). The process of purging one's traumatic experiences through writing lyrics, as well as listening to the artists vulnerability, can potentially act as a vital gateway into talking for both the creators and audience of UK drill. Notably, this also highlights the significance of considering context when analysing drill lyrics. Drillers may be offering the listener access/context to their most inaccessible lairs through the lyrics via expressing their perception of social reality and social milieus of which they have experienced (Baron and Scullin, 2013). While the dominant argument is that these dark lyrics are inciting violence, some note that the normalisation of violence for this neglected demographic is "the first step in reconciling the events of what happened… and finding a way to move on" (Gardstrom, 1999; Baron and Scullin, 2013; Virk, 2020. N.p.). Arguably, Aristotle's concept of catharsis has set the blueprint of storytelling in the modern age for the UK drill genre, with UK drill producers also emotionally benefitting from creating drill beats.

5.5 *A rose through the concrete:* UK drill, opportunity, and desistance

This section will explore the benefits of UK drill for artists and producers in reference to opportunity and desistance. Research carried out by Kenny (2015: p.g. 1) reasoned that the pop scene, specifically rap, has valorised "outrageous behaviour and the acting out of aggressive, sexual and destructive impulses that most of us only dare to live out in fantasy". Accordingly, Kenny (2015: p.g. 1) found that young rappers have succumbed to early deaths, with statistics showing that murder was the cause of 51% of deaths in rap musicians, compared to 4.4% of folk and 1.8% of country musicians from a sample of 12,665 predominantly male pop musicians who died between 1950 and 2014 in America (Kenny, 2015; Kenny, 2017). The above research, in line with recent views of UK drill held by the British authorities, argues that the spike in homicide is due to the genre's associations with drug-related crime and gang culture. UK drill, recognised as one of raps successors, has likewise encountered elevated levels of homicides, such as the stabbings and shootings of UK drill artists like SA and Bis (members of the Harlem Spartans), Incognito and GB (members of Moscow), SQ (member of 150) and Veli (member of OJB), amongst many more (DRILLR TV, 2018; BBC, 2021). Alas, for UK drillers, the genre's relation to crime has been the strategic focal point of the public, political bodies, and the police to censor the genre, with little attention being paid to how UK drill has profited its stakeholders via opportunity, success, and desistance. Desistance, in this sense, is how UK drill may contribute to steering a handful of individuals *away* from depravity and support a continuing non-offending lifestyle.

In spite of the years of public, media and police scrutiny that represents UK drill as the 'devil's work' (Williams, 2020), the genre has not ceased to thrive. Evidence from this study suggests that UK drill artists and producers from council estates have become household names amongst the mainstream. For instance,

comparable to successful rap and grime artists like Snoop Dog, Jay-Z, Stormzy and Drake, UK drillers like Headie One, Skengdo x AM, Digga D and Central Cee are too experiencing their rise to fame (Wade, 2018). Williams (2020) asserts that by UK drillers moving "from the streets to selling out the O2 Brixton", they are concurrently gaining financial stability in a country which has high rates of poverty, austerity, and associated criminality to gain fast money. During interview, Damien noted that UK drill exists as a lucrative opportunity to change their lifestyles

> Damien: *it's made me learn more about music and sounds, it's made me meet more artists, it's made me travel the world and have different experiences in different countries, and how they do music abroad... It's more about the experience like I know there's a lot of money game with it and the money is obviously important but, for me it's about the experience I've had and what I've learned during my journey.*

From the field diary, Danny added that UK drill acts as a means to "get out of the situations they are in without working a 9-5", with Kyle adding that the genre has created an entire "eco-system… you've got producers, graphic designers, young A&R's, young managers, video directors…benefiting the artists and young people in the community with the drill scene". For instance, artist Logan stated that drill has landed him radio interviews, documentaries and have put him on the "right track", with producer Matthew adding that drill has "put money in my pocket and given me good connections… It's like a doorway into the industry".

Seeing as the London reduction of crime unit has not garnered high quality evidence to suggest that there is a link between social media tension and real-world violence (Garden Court Chambers, 2021), more thought should be put towards UK drill's stake in supporting a non-offending lifestyle for drillers who have previously been involved in criminality (Bilby et al, 2014). The criminal justice system and its relationship to the creative arts has long been under-evaluated and under researched, but scholars such as Giordano et al (2002:999-1002) have found that participating in arts-based activities following offending

has led to agency, openness to change and believed a 'replacement self'. Desistance, then, stems from opportunity, such as creating music. For instance, drill artist Loski was caught with a loaded gun, Digga D was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and Headie One received six months in jail for possession of a knife. Though this does not defend their transgressions, Digga D's drill single 'No Diet' has sold more than 200,000 copies, Headie One has two top 10 UK chart singles and Loski's album "Music Trial & Trauma – A Drill Story" reached The Official Chart UK Top 40. Successful UK grime artist, Stormzy, additionally proves testament to music's positive impact on students in his contribution of £500,000 to fund educational scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds since 2018, with an additional 30 more Black students receiving scholarships to attend the University of Cambridge in 2021. All beings are flawed and despite these individuals experiencing difficulty in leaving their past behind, and being the scapegoats for Britain's socio-economic margins, UK drillers have still become 21st century entrepreneurs and capitalist success stories (Wade, 2018; Buditu, 2020). As part of this thesis, two participants confessed that their relationship to UK drill has contributed to them not returning to prison, while one did not want to discuss their criminal past. Each artist expressed sentiments like

> Corey: *since I've been released out of prison… Drill, me rapping as a whole helps me stay out of prison… Mmm it's a career, it's not just 'yeah let me get out the recording studio and go put it out there and see what the listeners are saying' it's actually when I sit home, plan, orchestrate, do music, promotion, all that like it's my job now init… I might work every day do you get it? So yeah music as a whole just keeps me out of trouble.*
>
> Damien: *[I'm] very very proud of where I am today because the maturity and the knowledge I've gained over the years, it's definitely been helpful in many ways and just music alone has helped me be more religious, more structured and more calculated…– like before music I didn't know anything about accountants…I didn't know about*

interest, I didn't know nothing about credit scores or none of that. Whereas now, for my music and my journey I've needed this stuff and I've learned about this stuff and I'm building my credit I'm building that so everything's good… music helps you with your actual personal life.

Evidently, UK drill artists with damaging pasts are *learning,* and should be given the time, or resources, to distance themselves from their transgressions. Unfortunately, one artist of this study stated, "if I never went to prison, I would never would have had that opportunity". It seems entirely unjust that solutions and help are only provided once the artist has returned to their previous lifestyles. Logan adds "if they [the government] had actually kept on pushing me…nagging me, then it would have put sense in my head… I would have took the advice yeah, their guidance". With the lack of government support available for these individuals, drillers and other drill stakeholders are being forced to create their own safe spaces and methods to avoid returning to deviant lifestyles.

5.5.1 *The studio vs. the streets:* a safe space

As part of this research study, all UK drill producers and artists discussed their view of music studios as safe and private spaces and its subsequent impact on the genre's creators to adhere from criminality in the absence of youth clubs. With local recording studios acting as their canvas, UK drill creators are able to safely express their narratives of urban street life (Pinkey and Robinson-Edwards, 2018). Music Fusion, a youth project in Hampshire run by Jinx Prowse, describes music studios as a safe place for young people to express themselves and feel belonged and respected, with music considered as the first step in moving away from crime. During a YouTube interview with Zeze Millz (Trend Centrl, 2020), UK drill artist Loski adheres to these statements

Loski: *part of their day is not even on the block anymore so that is a positive – they're in the studio. They probably bring in like 3, 4, maybe 10 mates with them that are then not even on the block that day.*

From the field diary, Damien expressed similar sentiments

Damien: *like it's saved a lot of people. It keeps them off the streets, it keeps them busy… using your hobby and your talent to build a career for yourself so you've got a task for yourself. So as much as things might be negative around you, you've still got a task and you're still aiming for something and a lot of people don't have that… like we should kinda be happy that a lot of artists are finding time to go to the studio, people are actually getting up and getting ready and sayin' 'yeah I'm goin studio'… they still went to an environment like a working environment and they feel good about it*

Another participant, Kyle, expressed

Kyle: *if anything I feel like drill music is helping the violence to go down because most of these artists, like whether they're lying, whether they're spitting the truth – they're doing studio sessions. They're doing music videos, they're in AMR meetings…. Photoshoots, press shoots, interviews, so they're not gonna be spending as much time like in their environment. They're going to be in a different environment and that's going to like cause less trouble and less altercations between rivals*

While carrying out data analysis, it was prominent that UK drill producers "never felt endangered" when in the studio environment, as Evan stated. Matthew added that his parents "know that I'm in a good environment" and "always busy…they are proud to be honest". While one participant, Camden, suggested that the studio is better than being "on the streets getting into trouble", he also implied that "there's no real risk to it other than running into the wrong people". Though this situation may be of concern to the police and potentially why UK drill artists such as Digga D have been subject to limited studio time subsequent

to his release from prison, founder of Music Fusion, Jinx Prowse, argues that the studio can bring rivals together (Barker, 2019: P.g. 1; BBC iPlayer, 2020). One individual from the scheme expressed, “I was feuding with some guy…it was a couple of days away from us stabbing one another…it was over nothing, a postcode”, but through Music Fusion, the artist stated, “I agreed to shake hands with my mortal enemy…the studio session was set up…then we shook hands… we’re still friends” (Barker, 2019: P.g. 1; Thapar, 2018).

5.5.2 *Banning drill:* a counterproductive approach to crime reduction

At the end of each interview, all 13 participants were asked whether banning, criminalising, or censoring UK drill would be beneficial. Without hesitation, and contrary to the assumptions made by the Policy Exchange report (Falkner, 2021) regarding drills impact on real life violent crime, all participants answered ‘no’. Participants stated that crime would drastically increase due to UK drill creators losing their only “escape revenue”, putting them back “on the roads”, vulnerable to “rivals” and “drug selling” and stripping them of their rights. Damien questioned “what do you expect young people to do?”, with other participants arguing that banning drill would “cause riots” and “kill people’s goals and dreams”. In line with Ilan’s (2020) argument, this thesis is testament that criminalising UK drill is both street illiterate and counterproductive from a crime-reduction/prevention perspective. In fact, it may achieve the opposite, thus demonstrating the value of the genre to UK drill stakeholders that should not be underestimated by those who are far removed from the scene (Williams, 2020**).** As one artist simply put during interview in response to those who disregard the value of drill and work towards its censorship

> Corey: *You lot on your poncy sofas, with your high-end class jobs, shitting on us, lookin’ down on us, just let us have our come-up init.*

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter argued that the consequences of criminalisation will not entirely prevent criminal behaviour. To begin, it outlined how UK drill lyrics are an informative resource regarding harsh societal inequalities and institutional racism. It later identified that UK drill stakeholders did not consider themselves to be part of a drill music subculture or the latter's negative associations. It found that not only did listening to UK drill positively impact consumer mood and behaviour but creating UK drill beats provided producers with positive reinforcement and pride, while lyric writing acted as a form of therapy for UK drillers to vent negative emotions. Finally, the chapter identified how UK drill aids artists financially, teaches them invaluable personal lessons regarding business, and additionally provides them and their peers with safe and productive environments, such as studios. Overall, based on participant answers, the chapter found that criminalising and censoring UK drill will cause counterproductive effects from a crime-reduction perspective (Ilan, 2020), by placing vulnerable artistic youth back on the streets, causing riots and removing a valuable therapeutic outlet.

Conclusion

Here I shall talk about the main findings of the MA thesis **"***Capturing UK drill in its complexity*: critically assessing the justifications for criminalising and censoring UK drill music and Black cultural expression". It is probable that certain lyrics or tensions amongst UK drillers could and have equated to adverse altercations. Nonetheless, this thesis provides qualitative evidentiary support derived from interviews with UK drill stakeholders, along with interdisciplinary research form cultural criminology, sociology, and psychology, to demonstrate the inappropriate practice of using UK drill lyrics and videos as evidence in the criminal justice system. Unless employed in the circumstance of watertight and insurmountable evidence related to drill that proves one's guilt beyond reasonable doubt, UK drill is, ultimately, a subjective art form built on the raw experiences tied to inner-city life, and the theatrical and profitable properties of bravado, shock, and violence.

As the researcher explored in the literature review, there has been a continuity of police racism experienced by Black people and Black music, viewed as the embodiment of an undesirable cultural expression (Fatsis, 2021). Upon outlining the treatment faced by its predecessors, the thesis delved into the origins of UK drill and how it quickly came under police scrutinization as an alleged contributor to the knife crime epidemic and catalyst for serious youth violence. The chapter summarised the multitude of ways that the government and police have attacked and racially decontextualised UK drill, i.e., removing drill YouTube content, utilising UK drill lyrics as evidence of joint enterprise and bad character, forming 'rap experts' to decode drill, and finally, obtaining Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO's) and gang injunctions to entirely control UK drillers' careers and personal lives. The research study upheld that acknowledging race is thereby crucial to grasp the unjustified and racially discriminative nature of musical censorship of Black genres. Given the severity of the situation affecting UK drillers and their musical content, and the current gaps in research on this topic, this thesis employed semi-structured qualitative interviews and empirical

chapters to capture their marginalised voices and to provide a richer understanding of how criminalising UK drill affects its stakeholders and their perceptions of these practices, as well as how the police approach to UK drill could perhaps be improved. In turn, three research questions were introduced and were subsequently used as the foundations for the following three empirical chapters regarding audience reception, discussions of authenticity, and debating the value of UK drill.

The third chapter demonstrated the versatility in how UK drill is used, perceived, interpreted and its subsequent effects on consumers, something which has not yet been explored by researchers. It further showed that consumers of UK drill place a substantial focus on almost every aspect of the music, apart from the lyrics, a finding which supports the argument that drill lyrics play a more minor role in inciting violence. Participants expressed how older generations attached a negative label to UK drill, causing damaging misunderstandings of drill messages. Furthermore, based on participant's answers, this research found that White listeners from affluent areas were considered to be more likely to act adversely upon consuming drill, due to a lack of relatedness and understanding of Black people and Black music genres compared to ethnic minorities. These findings question why predominantly more Black individuals are being stopped and searched and their music (preferences) conflated with crime and gangs, compared to their White counterparts (Home Office, 2021). Overall, the chapter argues that the justifications for criminalisation are therefore not rightly based off user experience of UK drill, and those tasked with decoding or critiquing UK drill must consider their age, race and additional demographic and biographical factors to ensure their views remain unbiased and street literate (Ilan, 2020).

In the fourth chapter, the thesis further explored whether the criminogenic scenarios and driller personas depicted in UK drill are literal, for evidential purposes in criminal trials, via exploring the concept of authenticity. Three typologies of authenticity were introduced based on participant answers, like drillers remaining true to their roots, true to origins of drill and upholding their reputation. The thesis demonstrated how many UK drill stakeholders are

incredibly informed on UK drill conventions, personas, lyrics and how to decode it. Nonetheless, the relationship between drill, authenticity and crime is still complex and nuanced, leading the researcher to believe UK drill lyrics should not be presented in criminal trials to ill-informed judges or juries of UK drills conventions. The thesis argued that though violent personas are adopted by many drillers, destructive representations are often relied on as a means of profit. Importantly, all participant artists of this research study discussed how they fabricate their lyrics, use metaphors, and/or exaggerate their experiences or situations they have witnessed in their drill songs, making drill lyrics unreliable as a source of intelligence and autobiographical confessions and bad character evidence. Via analysing typically 'negative' UK drill lyrics, it was argued that taunting rivals and displaying a willingness to use violence will not always confirm a drillers propensity to commit violent acts. In fact, the data found that UK drill stakeholders believed, more often than not, that negative drill lyrics did not influence real world violence to an extent that could justify the sanctions already placed upon UK drill. Overall, this thesis found that UK drill and it's conventions are not completely literal, but in the circumstance that they are, it is hard to distinguish between the fact-fiction hybridity of the genre. It is further argued that the process of commercialisation is functioning in a way which is progressively and naturally diluting UK drill into a more socially digestible form. Due to this, this thesis suggests that such drastically harsh interventions on UK drill are perhaps not warranted or needed.

Finally, the closing chapter explored whether the consequences of criminalisation will actually prevent criminal behaviour, by investigating what purposes UK drill serves for its consumers, producers, and artists. Through analysing UK drill jargon and lyrics, it demonstrated that the raw and menacing stories that are core to the genre should more be readily interpreted as a description of PTSD and trauma and a subsequent a cry for help, as opposed to an inciter of violence. Furthermore, negative depictions of authority figures in UK drill were viewed by this thesis as an insightful source of information regarding police racism. It seems to be, UK drillers are perhaps taking radical approaches in their lyrics to achieve radical change in their treatment. Upon discussions

regarding UK drill listeners, this thesis found that drill listeners did not consider themselves to be part of a drill subculture, thus, any negative associations tied to UK drill cannot necessarily be tied to its listeners, specifically in court cases using one's involvement in drill music videos as evidence of guilt by association or joint enterprise. Furthermore, this thesis found that UK drill music prevented drill listeners from physical outbursts and improved their moods. Similar findings were found with UK producers, with this chapter showing that producing drill beats acted as a therapeutic tool to promote feelings of pride, excitement, and happiness for participants. With regards to UK drill artists, participants and relevant literature outlined that lyric writing had significant benefits on purging drillers' emotions and dealing with trauma, the vulnerability of which was admired by UK drill listeners. It found that UK drill acts an effective tool for desistance for UK drill stakeholders who are/have been involved in criminal lifestyles, by educating them about finances, business, networking, and providing them with a structured lifestyle and safe spaces off of the streets, such as music studios. Finally, and most significant to this research study and in line with Ilan's (2020) arguments, according to UK drill stakeholders, the street illiterate practice of criminalising drill *will* yield counterproductive effects from a crime-reduction/prevention perspective. Participants expressed how banning UK drill would cause riots, protests, and surges in crime rates due to UK drill stakeholders losing their source of income, therapy, and overall method of desistance.

UK drill is, as this research study suggests, immensely valuable to those involved in the drill scene and greatly nuanced and complex to understand by those who are far removed from the scene. With the current need for a 'cadre' of defence and the use of drill experts growing to counterbalance police expert witnesses, this thesis puts forward that UK drill stakeholders should thusly be respected as informed UK drill experts in their own right, who could appropriately challenge the use of rap as evidence.

Ideas for future work

The current work provides qualitative data and relevant literature on criminalising and censoring UK drill from a UK drill stakeholders perspective. The limitations, as such, call for a qualitative approach which is inclusive of police perspectives, specifically seeing as authoritative institutions may have contextual intelligence regarding the linkages between drill music stakeholders and gang violence, that is not currently available to the public (Kleinberg and McFarlane, 2020). Future research could endeavour to gain the views of both UK drill stakeholders and police perspectives of UK drill music videos and lyrics, to locate and distinguish where discrepancies lie in interpretations and understandings of the genre, and how this can be remedied in order to generate an appropriate strategy or eradicate the use of employing UK drill content as evidence in criminal trials and to establish what content realistically poses a threat, and what is merely performative.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: Krept & Konan – Ban Drill (Short Film)

"Ban Drill" was a short film created by Krept and Konan to demonstrate the counterproductive effects of silencing musicians. The two artists later created a petition on Change.org to the Crown Prosecution service "to stop the police from being able to ban drill music by using the Serious Crime Act to prosecute artists" (Change.org, 2019). In their petition, the artists detailed how the soundtrack remains irrelevant in the face of urban poverty, lawlessness, and a decline in community policing. Instead, censoring artists is seen as a catalyst of poverty, racism, and classism for inner-city marginalised groups.

Petition link: https://www.change.org/p/crown-prosecution-service-stop-silencing-musicians

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuwcr-M37Do (Krept and Konan, 2019)

Appendix 2: Album cover comparison

The following images display the juxtaposition between country music album covers and UK drill music album covers. While country albums often appear with the background of meadows, greenery and general serenity, UK drill covers represent trauma, life on the streets, and generally embody darkness. Music industry executives therefore have strong control over the depictions, stereotypes and "misunderstandings" of UK drillers compared to artists of other genres. Or, more precisely, of White artists compared to Black artists (Fried, 2003).

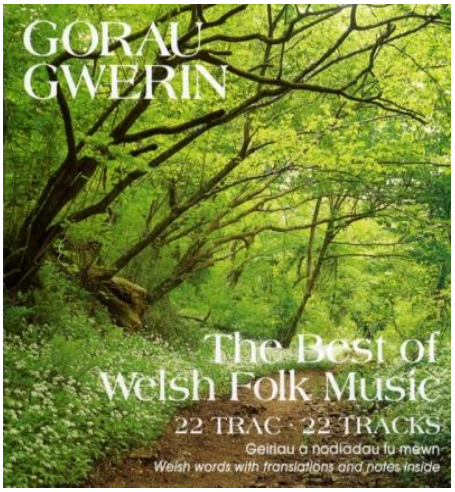

Figure 1. Source: (Adjei-Kontoh, 2020), figure 2. Source (Dhaliwal, 2019), figure 3. Source (clashmusic, 2020), figure 4. Source (Amazon, 2021), figure 5. Source (Spotify, 2019).

Appendix 3: Authenticity, crime, and style

Green (2018) notes that driller authenticity relies on the rappers relationship to their environment and social context, and as the raw voice of inner-city life in Chicago and Brixton, street authenticity is thus obtained via threats, boasts and style. UK drill stakeholders parading in tracksuits and bally's (balaclavas), however, became of particular concern to UK law enforcement as a symbol of demonising conformity (McLeod, 1999). Chief Inspector Craig Thomson (Manchester Evening News, 2013: n.p.) expands on this, stating

> *The masks seem to have become a fashion and are associated with gang activity and identity. They are extremely threatening and intimidating.*

The idea that dress code fortifies a criminal image closely echoes the treatment experienced by the Teddy boys in the mid 1950's (Macilwee, 2015). Evidently, any effort by youth to differentiate themselves, whether by the Edwardian style or balaclavas, allegedly confirms their ties to criminal gangs (Omaji, 2003. P.g. 26) and rejects its presence as a benign outfit accessory. Rather, the anonymous qualities of balaclavas allow for the individual to play with how they present themselves and to explore alternative *authentic* identities or alter egos (RoadWorks, 2020c). Markedly though, the institutional anxieties surrounding balaclavas as authentic drill style, are possibly also indicative of drill stakeholders experiences of lack of privacy and over-surveillance (Goulding, 2019). Since facial identification via drill music videos is now a common practice, balaclavas serve a dual function of protecting drill artists against potential opps, but also, from the police (Garden Court Chambers, 2020c). For instance, two listener interviewees' from the field diary described the necessity for drillers to hide their identity as a means of avoiding persistent police detection. During interview, Jasmine explains

> Jasmine: *when people wear a bally I need people to stop- like there's a massive thing of people just automatically think[ing] 'uhh they think*

> *they're hard' noo! You're literally 'no face no case' that's what they say 'no face no case'… 'hide your face, you'll buss case' to make sure no one comes for you simple as that.*

The interpretation above confirms that possibly, authenticity gained via wearing balaclavas could be less symptomatic of a violent persona but may rather be an effort to protect their career and safety (Williams, 2006). A drillers deliberate effort to cultivate a violent reputation by wearing a balaclava is what subsequently generates a level of ambiguity, trademark, online views, and attention. Nonetheless, this does not solely mean the individual is involved in or is provoking criminal activity. Rather, balaclavas may be a method to avoid it (Garden Court Chambers, 2020c). With the exception of drill artists like S1 stating in an interview with Thapar (2019) "the mask is a brand, a symbol, and wearing a mask is how you know man's still active", other drillers report covering their identity to protect their music career. One research participant, George, explains

> George: *well you've got groups like 67 where LD is constantly wearing a mask because he has to hide his identity- so he's actually banned from making music as himself so he has to put this mask on and he's LD to make this music and I think I appreciate that more than for example Loski, who is exaggerating a fake story.*

According to this interviewee's interpretation, balaclavas are a product of legitimate worries held by drillers. To avoid appearing as a sell-out, drillers maintain their authenticity via performance and style, whilst simultaneously avoiding police detection and a possible spot on the gang matrix (RoadWorks, 2020c; Amnesty International, 2018). Nevertheless, it would be reductive to assume that the reason for wearing a balaclava is merely to protect one's music career, as opposed to symbolising that one is criminally active. Importantly, the wearing of a balaclava symbolises nothing in isolation, rather, the situational context in which it is used, or what it represents, should be key to our understanding of authentic UK drill style and its alleged relationship to

criminality (Thapar, 2019). Arguably, law enforcement agencies could be giving drillers limited alternatives to protect their identities, career, and futures, thus essentially pushing them to wear clothing which is then undesirably labelled. Hence, the association between authenticity via clothing and calculated criminality comes to be weakened. Authenticity is not solely achieved via clothing, however. As Dedman (2011: p.g 507) argues,

> *"The fluidity of neo-tribes does not fully reflect the lived experiences of many young people today whose subcultural being is neither transient nor irrelevant".*

The scholar notes that one's personalised and autonomous engagement in various music subcultures is thus advertised on a sliding scale of subcultural identity and various cultural practices, whether through style or not (Dedman, 2011; Bennet, 2005; Hebidge, 1979). In fact, the field diary finds that there is a wealth of typologies and markers of authenticity noted by the drill stakeholders of this thesis, such as through one's persona and lyrics.

Appendix 4: Conversations about the perceptions of criminalising drill and the Drill Music Translation Cadre

As part of this thesis, all participants were given information regarding the Drill Music Translation Cadre (DMTC) and were subsequently asked what their thoughts were of the practice of police rap experts. Overall, answers given considered this to be an unfair practice by poorly equipped and street illiterate individuals. Below are some of the views held by UK drill listeners, artists, and producers, on their perceptions of the criminalisation of UK drill, as well as who they believed to be appropriate alternatives to the DMTC and other police rap experts.

Listeners:

> Anthony: *Nine times out of ten in songs they're just talking about the act of something rather than that they have done this …but I don't think police are equipped for that when they're jailing people who are very good and creative with not saying a thing and yet they're still convicting them so yeah, I don't think they are equipped… I don't even think something like that should exist.*
>
> Danny*: It's the same with anything if you're reading a text and you're in a bad mood, you're gonna likely think that person's being a bit bitchy with you even if they're just sending like a normal message but it's cos you've already got that thought in your head*
>
> George*: like I said they will take it out of context and when they're on the accusing side in court they're gonna wanna find any sort of dirt they can and they will take any snippet of music from an aritsts lyrics out of context and take it literally…they are trying to prosecute and lock that person up basically so they're going to be completely bias in the fact that 'this artist said' – cos they will probably even dig back*

into lyrics that were said four years ago which is, like I said that's when the artists were at their peak. So even though they might have gone to prison and are a completely different person now, like despite their glamorous lifestyle now, they will go back four years to when they were probably at their worst like they could not be in the same mental state as what they were now and just like I said taking it out of context

Jasmine*: it's very easy to misconstrue stuff it's very easy to misunderstand and I think a lot of people, they see one thing, they see a knife in a video and they think 'uh that's what drill is about, violence, knife, guns. I see boys with balaclavas that's what it's about' you know? little do you know that you could just be mid-caught video and they're just showing you as the victim where their house got robbed by the robbers…you know people just, people are very quick to judge and things are very easily misconstrued… How can you come from a completely different background, a completely different culture, you've grown up in a completely different environment, and you're – you're from point A and you're travelling over to the other end of the world, point Z, and you're telling me that you're now gonna sit here and you're now gonna break down my language and you're going to try and explain- tell me what I have said? What I have meant? Doesn't quite work like that.*

Louis*: I think that's out of order because you can literally write- you can literally write anything today like you can literally make up so much stuff and they could potentially prosecute you for you just making up things… So if a, a drill artist is talking about how they've killed someone or – or how they've killed someone in the past and they've got a way with it, I guess if that - I guess some of that could be used by going- like taking it to court and go 'oh you said you've killed – in this drill song you've said you've killed him in this way and that's actually what happened' I guess you could use it on that basis*

but erm yeah no I don't think you could properly use it. I guess it could be – I guess some of it could be used but not in the way they do it no…no because say for example you've got me. Say im the police officer, I'm not going to able to translate it properly. You've just got to know – the police officers got- what if they can't relate to it? or what if they don't know the slang or what they've meant of if they don't have a past in what's happened so if they can't relate to it then I don't think they are qualified enough to translate it.

Artists:

Loski (Trend Cntrl, 2020): *cos im not gonna lie its happened to me once not long ago I was on a case but I beat the case now but I'm- it was going on for like a good eight months but obviously what happened was – it's the same thing like they tried to show like certain music videos in court cos im kinda known to the police and that so they showed my music videos in court, saying that 'he must have done it' but where they didn't have no evidence what so ever, so they tryna use my music videos saying.. 'ah you talk about this in your bars' or you've even mentioned this person's name' that and they tell the judge that 'uhh your bad you're a bad person'… at the end of the day cos if they ain't got nothing you can still beat it at the end of the day with that- you can say easily like *laughs* pahh, you're not really rappin' what your livin' because they ain't really got proof that you've done that, they ain't got proof that you was livin' every single bar that you sayin'… if it's not you admitting it, it's just rapping about it. you should even not really- they shouldn't be really using that against you- you know what I mean? I mean cos they don't know if you've really done that or really doing what you're doing, they don't know that- you could just be lying about everything you know what I mean about selling drugs… I really see is that you should have a fair trial, like with the evidence or whatever the- whatever evidence that the police can get and give to the prosecutor, I reckon that's how it*

*should be and that. Just going on the evidence… but now, they really want you in jail that's what I mean because, I didn't even know that's what they are you know the 'drill experts' because there's people like that *laughing*… but they were talking about 'that what he's rappin' about this means that' because the judge didn't really know what it means so .. so there was someone that was explaining everything and then the prosecutor and that was sayin' 'this is what it means'… everybody should be able to have a fair trial without a drill experts there*

Corey: *it's no one's place to say anyone is a bad person, their actions show that they are a bad person or not init so for the people to be able to do that and get away with it of course I think it's wrong. Course I think it's wrong. You can't just cover what a man's sayin on a three minute clip sayin he's a bad person. Even if I didn't mix talking about bad things, you don't know what I do in my spare time. Do you understand?*

Damien: *Like I wouldn't say that's fair, I understand why it can be used but I don't think it's completely fair. We have like- our slang is completely different n' certain things we say and certain words that we – you can't- you're gonna have to- they'll have to ask me what I meant by that. They couldn't tell me what I meant from what I wrote that would be kind of ignorant of them to do. I understand they can have an idea of what they think I'm sayin, but if I told them 'Nah I meant this' and I explain to them that I meant this on the lyrics, they have to take it because I wrote the lyrics. It's like an author writing a book and you ask the author 'oh what did you mean by this chapter like it seems a bit' and they explain to you 'oh nah it may come across as that but what I'm tryna put out there is this is the message… That's the beauty of music cos everyone has a different understanding of lyrics. I've even had people say my lyrics to me before like friends who*

have known me for years and they've been saying my lyrics to me and they've got a couple words wrong, like it actually happens.

Producers:

Matthew*: No not really because I don't think they'd be able to hundred percent interpret what they're saying like, they might understand the slang words of the lingo, but they won't understand the message that's being put across. Erm, so it's like yeah I feel like that part is a bit unfair because it's like, the only person that's gonna understand what they're tryna get across is the artist, so how you gonna someone else who's not written the lyrics, who's not even experienced or seen what they've seen, to tell someone else what they're rapping?*

Camden*: Mmm, I feel like some rappers will just taking- they'll just find another way to speak about stuff they'll just find another code like code words and translations that they can find instead. I think that's crazy that's happening… I could understand why they've done it but I don't think it's fair but then I don't necessarily think the police are fair… not everything should be taken literally so it's a bit- it is it is bias cos the translators can almost spin it so it's – it looks a certain way…Yeah like 'look they've got a gun, look they've got this look they've got that' and then they could just be playing a character*

Kit: *Whether or not he actually has or hasn't done these things there's no way a rapper would snitch on themselves properly in their own song. So it's a waste of time. It's just like, if you are dumb enough to snitch on yourself and you have done these sorts of things then the only way you find yourself in these situations where you're in court in the first place is if someone has snitched on you… unless someone has heard the song already, gone out and staged a crime that matches the song, before the song comes out, then it's not gonna be of any use to anybody. I mean I can see why they would want to but I think it*

would be a waste of their time and they could use their resources a lot better

Appendix 5: *Suitable decoders:* interviewee recommendations on rap experts

Listeners:

Kyle: *I don't, know it's not fair at all, I feel as if if they're gonna do that they have to get somebody who's in the scene like I know like they might feel as if it's bias or whatever but get a record label director, get an artist manager, get- that artis'ts mangers maybe or even at times get the artist like you don't know what the artist can say*

Jasmine: *The person themselves. The artist themselves. Who better could you go to and say 'what is this about?' rather than playing all these Chinese whispers, why don't you actually go and ask that artists themselves and say 'excuse me, so what was this about?'… Like a worker or someone – or someone in place to say 'okay, I've grown up in the hood.. I've been through it, I'm a social worker or I'm a so and so and I can sit here with you and I can try and help unde- help you understand what this means.*

Anthony: *if someone has an artist manager or a team, it always has to be the team or the artist manager of the artist*

George: Maybe like a retired artists I guess, somebody that's lived the same lifestyle I guess

Artists:

(Non- participant) Loski: *it should maybe be in your defence it should be in your defence atleast that's like a youth worker, even if it's like a youth worker that can translate it but can just say like "look, it doesn't mean that"* (Trend Cntrl, 2020)

Producers:

Evan: *yeah I do definitely think that someone that definitely knows a lot more about the lyrics- the lingo and slang whatever, should be like handed these tasks.*

Appendix 6: Example coding table

Core theme	Subtheme	Description	Keywords
Authenticity	Violent personas	Conventions of UK driller personas.	*Character, polite, façade, performance.*
	Violent lyrics	Perceptions of how drill lyrics are created.	*Talent, metaphors, exaggerate, fashion, hype.*
	Dress	Perceptions of UK drill style.	*Balaclavas/ballys, tracksuit, no face no case, don't get caught lacking, misconstrued, fashion.*
	Relationship with criminality	Perceptions on whether UK drill is related to crime.	*Midframe, amplifier, retaliation, rivals.*
Value	Opportunity	The benefits of UK drill for drill stakeholders.	*Money, saving, proud, career, productive.*
	Effect on mood and behaviour	How listening to UK drill effects listeners mood and behaviour.	*Positive, energies, focus, pumped, emotions.*
Audience reception	Level of understanding/relatedness	How ones level of understanding and relatedness of drill effects "misinterpretations."	*Gatekeepers, relate, background, experiences, willingness.*

	Reasons for listening	Why UK drill listeners interact with the music.	*Tempo, beats, flows, storytelling, lyrics.*

Karma – "Life's shit" (Genius, 2019a)

Life's just sh*t (sh*t), but this is the life I live (Live)
Feds keep taking my guys and nigs (Free the guys)
I don't lack, don't slip, long blade on my hip, I ain't tryna get dipped (No way)
Everytime I see jakes, I sprint (Dash), 'cah the pigs just wanna tell a n*gga he's nicked
I hate when the jakes try make me strip
Fags, why you wanna see my di*k? (Fags)
This is the life I live, I hate it but still love the life I live (I love it)
I gotta grip that, take that risk, I ain't tryna get turned to a name in riz (No way)
And I really had enough of this sh*t (I had it)
Man, I really had enough of this lifestyle, so right now still tryna get rich
Wanna be rich from a little young kid (Word)

[Verse]
Took a few L's, had me feeling all p*ssed (I did)
No, I didn't ever wanna get nicked but the life I live made me take that risk (Trust me)
Have you ever been so broke? (Broke)
I don't think so (Nah)
Mum couldn't buy new shoes, it was two weeks straight I was doing up plimsolls (Real talk)
My mum tried as hard as she could, how'd I end up so bad with a mum that good? (How?)
Life of a crook, tryna get out the hood
I find it hard to leave my nank at home (I do, I do)
I've got beef, it is what it is (It is)

I don't lack anywhere I go (No way)
You don't know what the next day brings (You don't)
So I got mine, I keep it close
You have to take precautions (Mm)
Real talk, man, you have to be careful (Be care)
Been there, done that, worn the t-shirt
I see the O I could never be fearful
I see cats like a crazy cat lady (Lady), none of these cats them throwing out hairballs (No way)
See straps, like, your breast has baby (Bap, bap)
Make a n*gga see corn, no scarecrow (Bap)
He can be a badman, he can be crazy
It don't phase me, I really don't care, bro (Don't care)
Real talk, I really don't fear no man (Don't fear), we scare those man
Got devlish blade like Nero, fam
They talk but I really gotta bare that chat, 'cah I been out here tryna pierce mans hat (Splash)
They talk but I really gotta bare that chat, 'cah I been out here tryna pierce mans hat (Hat)

[Chorus]
Life's just sh*t (sh*t), but this is the life I live (Live)
Feds keep taking my guys and nigs (Free the guys)
I don't lack, don't slip, long blade on my hip, I ain't tryna get dipped (No way)
Everytime I see jakes, I sprint (Dash), 'cah the pigs just wanna tell a n*gga he's nicked
I hate when the jakes try make me strip
Fags, why you wanna see my di*k? (Fags)
This is the life I life, I hate it but still love the life I live (I love it)
I gotta grip that, take that risk, I ain't tryna get turned to a name in riz (No way)
And I really had enough of this sh*t (I had it)
Man, I really had enough of this lifestyle, so right now still tryna get rich

Wanna be rich from a little young kid (Word)

[Outro]
Life's just sh*t
This is the life I live
Keep taking my guys and n*ggas man, for real
Free the guys
Wanna see us first?
f*ck the Jakes, man
R.I.P's and free's
Gang sh*t
Karma

AM – "Attempted 2.0" (Genius, 2018)

Attempted
Shoulda been a murder
Something got boof buff bow bunned with the burner
We're active, let's go halfs on the burger
Big MAC-10, can I get fries?

Aydee got cheffed in the ends times two
Donny had enough and he went OT
Then he got cheffed upsuh
Fucking hell who made it three?
Bellz got chinged, he was tryna go cafe
And his young g got cheffed times three
He was in the lack trying to get some wings
Don't nobody know about Uber Eats?

Anwar got cheffed and he pissed himself

Donny should of said that he had to pee

Done saw man two times already

One more time and a boy got chiefed

Gface dun got cheffed in the eye

Blind man's bluff and now man can't see

He's young g dun got cheffed on the bus

Don't anybody know about Addison Lee?

And they talk about ha-hazard, daddy's boy better have manners

We ain't into no chat

Disrespect and we back hammers

Take trips to the otherside

Blacked out my niggas ride

We're hunters, back it out and watch niggas hide

And they talk about ha-hazard, daddy's boy better have manners

We ain't into no chat

Disrespect and we back hammers

Take trips to the otherside

Blacked out my niggas ride

We're hunters, back it out and watch niggas hide

Something got cheffed splashed dipped splashed

Cheffed like onions

Like how you gonna leave your cousins?

Sign out cause the shits disgusting

Ugh its nothing

They ain't gonna stay when they see my nine

I'll be afraid if he was my guy

He really dun left his bredrin twice

Man kept back in a wonder

Lurk round there in a Honda

You can get bun like hatz

Or you can get cheffed like his younger

How you still chill with Naghzy

Probably should of held some shells

Nigga ain't allowed in Brixton

Cause he likes boys and girls

Cause what do you mean?

None of them boy are bad

Oboy's probably gay

Why he always chat about man?

Loose dun dash with the wap

Don't know how to feel about that

I'm fucking dead

Bitch just stick to the rap

And they talk about ha-hazard, daddy's boy better have manners

We ain't into no chat

Disrespect and we back hammers

Take trips to the otherside

Blacked out my niggas ride

We're hunters, back it out and watch niggas hide

Attempted

Shoulda been a murder

Something got boof buff bow bunned with the burner

We're active, let's go halfs on the burger

Big MAC-10, can I get fries?

Active, Active

Gang gang gang

Cause what do you mean?

None of them boy are bad

Oboy's probably gay

Why he always chat about man?

Loose dun dash with the wap

Don't know how to feel about that

I'm fucking dead

Bitch just stick to the rap

Digga D - No Diet (Genius, 2019b)

Whip it, set it, flick it, cheff it

Cop it, chop it, press it

Cop it, lock it, sell it

Rob it, fly it, drop it, dry it

It's there on demand, I supply it

You know the coke ain't diet

Your nose to the gun then buss, lean, lean with a gun like Russ

No one ain't dying, they lying on us, no carb in the yard then I'm flying it dust

Truss, no loyalty, she's lining them up

No royalty, your queen give it up, cheff chest and back, I'm leaving him rubbed (Ching)

Up and down, no seesaw, detour, oi, dodge that neenaw

I got 6 and if you add 3 more, then I'm somewhere where I might get recalled

And I'm tired of seeing the can

Whole ting get shell down (Woy-woy-woy-woy-woy-woy)

Got the fairy .44, big bang (Bubu)

Bro don’t box like Joshua, shank game popular, do man proper, shotta

Throw me a box and I got ou, man take risks for the pounds and prosper

Prosper, they had me in the can like Foster

Let the Star buck for the cream, no Costa (Cream)

That nigga don’t really want beef

Who’s copying me? Some silly impostor

Whip it, set it, flick it, cheff it

Cop it, chop it, press it

Cop it, lock it, sell it

Rob it, fly it, drop it, dry it

It's there on demand, I supply it

You know the coke ain't diet

Whip it, set it, flick it, cheff it

Cop it, chop it, press it

Cop it, lock it, sell it

Rob it, fly it, drop it, dry it

It's there on demand, I supply it

You know the coke ain't diet

Spill some juice, KA

And it was a carnival crush when bro, got three in a day

17 with a .38, praying that they come my way

.32's, .25's and .40's, conceived in the 90's

Born in the Noughties, cover these tats' when I'm going on walkies

No porkies, jail house filled stories

OT, hit town, need more fiends, so I'm on the M, switch lane like Tory (Skrr)

Bill up my spot and I’m leaving it gory

Surely, surely, bro's faster, he'll do it before me (Neeaw)

You want it? I got it, call me, I whip it and lock it at Pauly's

This one's feeling horny

Got a rusty ting from South with the mouth, she ain't getting more than Morleys

I’ma buss in her mouth by all means

Whip it, set it, flick it, cheff it

Cop it, chop it, press it

Cop it, lock it, sell it

Rob it, fly it, drop it, dry it

It's there on demand, I supply it

You know the coke ain't diet

Whip it, set it, flick it, cheff it

Cop it, chop it, press it

Cop it, lock it, sell it

Rob it, fly it, drop it, dry it

It's there on demand, I supply it

You know the coke ain't diet

Central Cee- Day in the Life (Genius, 2020c)

Strikes on the mix

Day-Day in the life

Let's see if you really trap

Turn off the autotune

Let's hear how you really rap (haha)

Sen-Send a location

Come burn a boy if you're bad (let's see)

Your dad left home from young

And you ain't done shit for your mum, ah man (ah man)

How are you relying on man like gyal?

You're mad, you mas'a mad

You ain't never sat in the trap with a pack

Hear the doorbell ring and your heartbeat lag

Can't keep track, been in the trap

It's hard, I can't keep up (keep up)

Selling them party drugs

I'm the one that got the party tu'nt

Everyone say they T (T)

Fascinated by the trap

I might put the bando on Airbnb (B)

Leave a good review, next time you come

Get some get one for free (who's that?)

Who's that with the hair on fleek

She made me beat my horn, it's peak

I try stay low in the Jeep, low-key (discrete)

The Feds ain't dumb, they know wagwan

But the young G's too naive

Little bro got nicked two times this week

Freedom's priceless, not cheap

Fu-Fuck you, pay me

Got a booking fee plus VAT (VAT)

RIP A1, it's sad that he didn't see eighteen

Day-Day in the life

Let's see if you really trap

Turn off the autotune

Let's hear how you really rap (haha)

Sen-Send a location

Come burn a boy if you're bad (let's see)

Your dad left home from young

And you ain't done shit for your mum, ah man (ah man)

How are you relying on man like gyal?

You're mad, you mas'a mad

You ain't never sat in the trap with a pack

Hear the doorbell ring and your heartbeat lag

Can't keep track, been in the trap

It's hard, I can't keep up

Selling them party drugs

I'm the one that got the party tu'nt

Bro-Bro said I going all dumb

I won't leave that trap alone

Come like I'm young in love
Got a toxic relationship with Stacey
But she won't cut me off
Can't be breaking even no more
Brodie, I must see prof'
(Came to the) Came to the bando healthy
Left with a dusty cough
Love-Love-Loving the goldest rose
Like the England rugby top
These bitches lie, relationship advice
Don't trust these thots
Everyone talk gun 'pon beat
But in their real life, no gun beat off (Hehe)
Keep the convo brief, say no more my g
Don't you know that talk is cheap?
Like my gyaldem short and sweet
Wha'y - Wha'ya mean "Can you sit on my face?"
She listens to too much DBE
Everyone got PTSD
How come everyone now sip on lean?
Don't you know that I grind two fours?
I'm on 24's like Christmas Eve
Bro why you act surprise?
I told you this and you didn't believe
Can deal with the trap being dirty
Can't deal with the dirty D's
If the yard I'm in gets spun
I won't come home 'till I'm thirty three

Day-Day in the life
Let's see if you really trap
Turn off the autotune
Let's hear how you really rap (haha)

Sen-Send a location

Come burn a boy if you're bad (let's see)

Your dad left home from young

And you ain't done shit for your mum, ah man (ah man)

How are you relying on man like gyal?

You're mad, you mas'a mad

You ain't never sat in the trap with a pack

Hear the doorbell ring and your heartbeat lag

Can't keep track, been in the trap

It's hard, I can't keep up

Selling them party drugs

I'm the one that got the party tu'nt

You ain't never sat in the trap with a pack

Hear the doorbell ring and your heartbeat lag

(You ain't never sat in the trap with a pack)

Frosty (hear the doorbell ring and your heartbeat lag)

Loski – Blinded (Genius, 2020b)

You can have all the facts

But still not know the true story

Judge not that ye be judged

Unless the judge is the one who caused your problems

People never change

They're just exposed

But your surroundings can change

I hope you never end up in these surroundings

(TSB)

Lights are blinding my eyes
People whooshing by
They're walking off into the night

Blue lights keep blinding my eyes
Bright, bright like the diamond shine
Have you ever put your life on the life on the line?
When it all goes wrong it's like you lost your mind
Don't know how I feel, they're like, "He must be fine"
And my lifestyle changed, I just wonder why
When I'm on that stage I see all them lights

Blue lights keep blinding my eyes
Bright, bright like the diamond shine
Have you ever put your life on the life on the line?
When it all goes wrong it's like you lost your mind
Don't know how I feel, they're like, "He must be fine"
When I turned thirteen that was country time
Blue lights, but would I get away in time?

Demon in palm angels
I see broski do it so fatal
Mish mash for the stack so grateful
My names Loose, I ain't I lacking in bagel
I know my bro will never kill me, he ain't able
If I die right now I failed
You was in school when I was doing well
See the dead in my sleep, it's like a fairy-tale
We lost SA, tore the block in half
Lost Risky, now I got no love
Hoes on me, I don't want no hugs
Three barbies and I'm with two thugs
Her ex one's a lame so she got no trust
Dot dots go buck, who's on stuff?

I ain't ever been robbed, nah, that's nuts
I see blue lights, of course I dust

Blue lights keep blinding my eyes
Bright, bright like the diamond shine
Have you ever put your life on the life on the line?
When it all goes wrong it's like you lost your mind
Don't know how I feel, they're like, "He must be fine"
And my lifestyle changed, I just wonder why
When I'm on that stage I see all them lights

Blue lights keep blinding my eyes
Bright, bright like the diamond shine
Have you ever put your life on the life on the line?
When it all goes wrong it's like you lost your mind
Don't know how I feel, they're like, "He must be fine"
When I turned thirteen that was country time
Blue lights, but would I get away in time?

I feel like I'm wasting time
Stevie Wonder, they blind
Let it sing like Jackson 5
Peter Pan when he let that fly
They lied if they said that the bando's nice
Back then it weren't great it was lovely
We mish mash to survive
Pull up, are you gonna back your guy?
Bro use any reason to slide (muh muh)
Every other block man beefing
Bro had smoke in his kidulthood
No, he ain't Adam Deacon
Couldn't bring bro to the show, I was pissed
I hope that he knows I won't leave him

I'ma get the bag and bring it right back
And make sure my peoples eating

Blue lights keep blinding my eyes
Bright, bright like the diamond shine
Have you ever put your life on the life on the line?
When it all goes wrong it's like you lost your mind
Don't know how I feel, they're like, "He must be fine"
And my lifestyle changed, I just wonder why
When I'm on that stage I see all them lights

Blue lights keep blinding my eyes
Bright, bright like the diamond shine
Have you ever put your life on the life on the line?
When it all goes wrong it's like you lost your mind
Don't know how I feel, they're like, "He must be fine"
When I turned thirteen that was country time
Blue lights, but would I get away in time?

Lights are blinding my eyes
People whooshing by
They're walking off into the night
Lights are blinding my eyes
People whooshing by
They're walking off into the night

People whooshing by
They're walking off into the night

Loski – Black (Genius, 2020a)

Ayy

I love black cars, black Germans
Love black girls, I think Eva's perfect
Mum said the roads weren't worth it
We protest and they think it's purging
So much to lose, I'm learning
Feds see a IC3 and think, "Search him"
I don't care if I'm biased, so what?
Cah the England captain should be Sterling
I love black cars, black Germans
Love black girls, I think Eva's perfect
Mum said the roads weren't worth it
We protest and they think it's purging
So much to lose, I'm learning
Feds see a IC3 and think, "Search him"
I don't care if I'm biased, so what?
Cah the England captain should be Sterling

I'm ski, Tupac, all eyes on me
Sleepless nights 'cause of Risky G
I can't be free till my mind's at peace
Officer, why won't you let me be?
Why won't you let me be?
Gang signs turn to prayer hands
When your locked in a cell and can't leave
My aunties cry when I'm locked, can't leave
Marje cry when I'm locked, can't leave
Grandmas cry when I'm locked, can't leave
Little cause dem still look up to me
Pray that my little brother becomes a baller
They think that the roads done something for me
Xans and lean, tryna hide my feelings
Bae wanna know why I always sleep
I got war with my own and feds

Think 'bout my block, it's like no ones left
Lie when I say I love skengs and peds
But I love my life so I always step
Can't take back what I've done or said
I've got nothing to prove
Except on trial I've so much to lose
They say I love waps
Who's lying on who?

I love black cars, black Germans
Love black girls, I think Eva's perfect
Mum said the roads weren't worth it
We protest and they think it's purging
So much to lose, I'm learning
Feds see a IC3 and think, "Search him"
I don't care if I'm biased, so what?
Cah the England captain should be Sterling
I love black cars, black Germans
Love black girls, I think Eva's perfect
Mum said the roads weren't worth it
We protest and they think it's purging
So much to lose, I'm learning
Feds see a IC3 and think, "Search him"
I don't care if I'm biased, so what?
Cah the England captain should be Sterling

When you're raised in the streets got your heart on your sleeve
Street trauma's been a fucker
I lost my brother, my heart's on freeze (freeze)
Couple times couldn't bring my brothers
If I make it right that's all on me (on me)
We was on the ends just burning one
Feds came and they questioned me (why?)

Uh uh, the kid don't speak

Can't go back to jail

That's mackerel

I be eating five times a week (five times)

And if I ever suck food like vacuums

Then I'm sorry for the yutes that eat

My darg let it sneeze like hatchu

So how the fucks I got feds on me?

I said my darg let it sneeze like hatchu

So how the fuck I got feds on me?

Can't go back 'cause my fans need me

My name's bankroll, I don't rap for free (no)

I treat Ibiza like the bando, flying out like OT (OT)

You never seen a driller so stylish (no)

They know I keep them bands on me (on me)

When I die I just wanna make history (history)

Loski Loose, that's me (that's me)

I love black cars, black Germans

Love black girls, I think Eva's perfect

Mum said the roads weren't worth it

We protest and they think it's purging

So much to lose, I'm learning

Feds see a IC3 and think, "Search him"

I don't care if I'm biased, so what?

Cah the England captain should be Sterling

I love black cars, black Germans

Love black girls, I think Eva's perfect

Mum said the roads weren't worth it

We protest and they think it's purging

So much to lose, I'm learning

Feds see a IC3 and think, "Search him"

I don't care if I'm biased, so what?

Cah the England captain should be Sterling

Appendix 8: UK drill music playlist

1. Loski – Black (2020)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btFDtRRQr5c
2. Loski – Blinded (2020)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abP9y8_EXKA
3. Drillminister – Political Drillin (2018)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spJoRLpDLLM
4. Russ Millions x Tion Wayne – Body (2021)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYPX5juKBvg
5. Digga D – No Diet (2019)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEc2ZWIJKxc
6. AM – Attempted 1.0 (2018)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wzFXUpOuLQ
7. Central Cee – Day in the Life (2021)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq2JJf7jB00
8. Headie One x RV – Know Better (2018)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMkK4JR-pho
9. Karma – Life's Shit (2020)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13ZucMDn0kY
10. Skengdo x AM x Drillminister – Political Drills (2019)
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtlziOxKjcY
11. Skengdo x AM – Mad about Bars (2017)
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FtqBBOiJ1k
12. Headie One – The One (2018)
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QZnaGFzoPE
13. Central Cee – Obsession (2021)
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3k2J7eavWiM
14. LD (67) – Church (2016)
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yM_o6O-ZdwU
15. PS (Zone 2) – No Safety (2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6szQvu21NDs

Appendix 9: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Criminalisation and Censorship of Drill Music

Name of Researcher: Isobel Ingram

Contact details:

Address:	Canterbury Christ Church University North Holmes Rd Canterbury Kent CT1 1QU
Tel:	[supervisor office telephone number)
Email:	[university email]

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2. (If applicable) I confirm that I agree to any audio and/or visual recordings.	
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential and in line with the University Research Privacy Notice	
4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time, without giving a reason.	
5. I agree to take part in the above project.	

—

Name of Participant:	Date:	Signature:
Name of person taking consent *(if different from researcher)*	Date:	Signature:
Researcher: Isobel Ingram	Date:	Signature:

Copies: 1 for participant

1 for researcher

Appendix 10: Participant information sheet

The Criminalisation and Censorship of UK Drill Music

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Isobel Ingram.

Please refer to our Research Privacy Notice for more information on how we will use and store your personal data.

Background

In 2018, the government introduced the Serious Violence Strategy, naming drill music as the driver of criminal exploitation, violence, and the knife crime epidemic. Thus far, research surrounding the drill music genre and its connection to crime has consisted of numerical data, making it difficult to understand this complex issue on a deeper level. The main aims of this piece will be to collect elaborate accounts, perceptions, and experiences from the stakeholders of the drill scene, for the purpose of better informing public perceptions and policy, of the genre and its intricate nature.

What will you be required to do?

Participants will be required to complete a semi-structured interview to do with their involvement in the drill music scene.

To participate in this research you must:

Be a stakeholder in the drill music scene.

Procedures

Participants will be expected to complete a semi-structured interview between January 1st 2021 and April 30st 2021, the location of which (online or face-to-face) will be reliant on government guidelines closer to the time.

Feedback

It is not expected that participants will require any feedback once the interview has taken place.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The following categories of personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) will be processed:

- *Interviews will be anonymised so it is not expected, nor necessary, that any personal data will need to be stored*.

We have identified that the public interest in processing the personal data is:

- *Interviews will be anonymised so it is not expected, nor necessary, that any personal data will need to be stored*.

Data can only be accessed by, or shared with:

Interviews will be anonymised so it is not expected, nor necessary, that any personal data will need to be stored.

The identified period for the retention of personal data for this project:

Interviews will be anonymised so it is not expected, nor necessary, that any personal data will need to be stored.

If you would like to obtain further information related to how your personal data is processed for this project please contact *Isobel Ingram at i.ingram29@canterbury.ac.uk*

You can read further information regarding how the University processes your personal data for research purposes at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Dissemination of results

The Masters thesis will be published in the CCCU library and may potentially be used for conference presentations.

Process for withdrawing consent to participate

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate in this research project at any time without having to give a reason. To do this, you must contact and inform the researcher via the email or telephone number provided below and on the consent form.

You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Any questions?

Please contact *Isobel Ingram* at *[university email]*

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