

MASTER'S THESIS BY JORAN DE JONG

FAVOURITE RAPPERS OR FAVOURITE CAPPERS?

AN ONLINE SEMIOTIC FIELD STUDY ON AMSTERDAM
DRILL PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION



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**MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM
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ABSTRACT

Through the Internet, drill rap has become increasingly popular across the globe as a novel offshoot of gangsta rap. The introduction of the music genre to the Netherlands caused widespread social concerns regarding the romanticisation of violence, especially knife crimes, that is allegedly inherent in drill. Despite being a relatively uncomprehended phenomenon, the Amsterdam drill scene, as one of the largest Dutch scenes, remains unstudied yet. Therefore, this thesis aims to exploratively provide a cultural and digital criminological understanding of the symbols that are used by Amsterdam drill rappers and that are interpreted and used by online drill consumers. In doing so, it applies a digital research design entailing content analysis of 173 Amsterdam drill music videos and ten weeks of netnographic fieldwork on online drill consumers. This mixed-method approach shows that Amsterdam drill rappers are using visual and audio symbols to brand an artistic persona grounded in commodified representations of resistance. Online drill consumers respond to these commodifications by discussing whom is the most authentic drill rapper. As they immerse themselves in the cathartic experiences of drill, the music genre is not a product of alienation or a lack of culture, but heavily intertwined with late modern mainstream culture.



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I hope that my thesis fascinates you into the drill subject as much as I did. Enjoy reading.

Joran de Jong
Utrecht, 26 July

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CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

On 3 September 2019, 18-years old Jay-Ronne Grootfaam — also known by his artist pseudonym *RS* — was murdered in *de Bijlmer*, a neighbourhood in Amsterdam South-East. According to media coverage shortly after his death, the murder was the result of a feud between two rivalling ‘drill rap’ groups representing different neighbourhoods throughout Amsterdam South-East (Bahara, 2019). Here, drill rap can be defined as “an emerging genre of hyperviolent, hyperlocal, DIY-style gangsta rap that claims to document street life and violent criminality” (Stuart, 2020, p. 3). Originating from the US, drill’s popularity transferred to the United Kingdom, where it accordingly inspired Dutch drill (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 18). Since the arrival of the music genre to the Netherlands in 2017, some urban youth have immersed themselves in the production of drill rap as they are heavily inspired by their UK counterparts (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 42).

In drill rap, youth use music to confirm one’s own authenticity and challenge those of others whilst presenting themselves as hyperviolent. In music videos, drill rappers — or simply ‘drillers’ — are oftentimes standing with a large group of peers of which some or all of them are part of a ‘drill group’. These groups usually defend a represented territory from so-called ‘opps’, or opponents, whom they forbid to enter their area. Just as entering an ‘opp block’ — the rivalling territory — challenges someone’s authenticity, drillers threaten their ‘opps’ or retell (fictive or real) stories of perpetrating violence to degrade another’s authentic persona. Supported by ominous instrumentals, the violent performance through music videos is usually invigorated by romanticising the use of weapons — especially knives in the UK and the Netherlands. Although they attempt to portray a musical performance that promotes themselves as violent and authentic, this label is usually limited to their artistic persona. The real identities of Dutch drillers are frequently hidden as they adhere to the ‘no face, no case’ policy in which they suppose that the concealment of their face wards off identification by authorities (Ilan, 2020; Roks & van den Broek, 2020; Stuart, 2020). The hyperviolent symbols and sometimes fatal repercussions allegedly caused by, or at least related to, the subgenre gained the attention of politicians and mass media across the Netherlands. It sparked public debates about whether we could pose a causal link between the music genre and violent incidents, or whether drill rap should be seen as a catalyst in evoking violence (Bahara, 2019; Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 4).

On the one hand, Dutch drill production has become increasingly popular in various Dutch cities, with the Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam as the most prominent ones (Bahara, 2020). On the other hand, Dutch drill consumption is widespread as it attracts millions of (young) consumers online (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 114). The prevalent public concern since the death of Grootfaam is predominantly based on explicit rivalries between drill groups, violent symbols in music videos, allegedly related violent incidents and the relatively young age of its perpetrators and victims (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 15-18). Whilst these appearances might be shocking for the general public as it violates late modern imaginations of order and safety, a criminological study on Dutch drill could provide a more nuanced understanding of how it is embedded in the current street- and youth culture. Furthermore, the need to fathom out the drill subculture through criminological goggles is also significantly relevant for various parties within the field of juvenile security. Amongst other violent symbols, Dutch drill is notoriously linked to the portrayal, possession and violent use of knives. Although the exact figures are unclear (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 19), many professionals and media platforms perceive the rising rates of knife crimes in the Netherlands as alarming. Hence, the Amsterdam chief of police argued that knife possession is “getting out of control” as “street- and youth culture is changing” (AT5, 2019). This concern has sparked debates concerning the supposed normalisation of violence and knife crimes amongst youth that are influenced by drill rap (van der Krol, 2020; Diekman, 2020). A criminological understanding of how symbols relate to the local drill subculture — and its embeddedness in street- and youth culture across neighbourhoods — will therefore be of significant relevant use for local law enforcement. It could add knowledge to the relatively uncomprehended drill phenomenon and how to engage with it. Hence, this is what the present thesis aims to accomplish.

Whilst drill is a global phenomenon, with the US and the UK as its pioneers (Fatsis, 2019; Ilan, 2020; Stuart, 2020; Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 15-18), the introduction of Dutch drill does not necessarily lead to the appropriation of the same universal drill symbols as in other countries. As Fatsis (2019) has particularly stated, the introduction of drill to the UK induced it to fuse with grime — a popular hip hop genre in the UK. Through this process, which will be elaborately discussed in chapter 2, the music symbols are strongly dependent on the local context from which it arises. Therefore, recent and the only full-fledged criminological research on Dutch drill limited its focus to Rotterdam. Even within the demarcated city boundaries of Rotterdam, the researchers discovered heterogeneous external appearances across various city neighbourhoods (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 56). Taking the effect of locality on drill into

account, the vigorously popular rise of drill in Amsterdam and the absence of academic research on its local manifestations call for a better understanding of Amsterdam drill. This thesis will, therefore, focus on drill music within the specific demarcated context of Amsterdam from an exploratory perspective.

Such a research design is best suited to be positioned in a cultural criminological theoretical framework. Cultural criminology supports the positioning of the drill phenomenon in late modernity and supports a perspective on subcultures where it explicitly focuses on symbols, styles, fashions, consumerism, commodification and mediated representations of crime. Moreover, as drill is predominantly situated *online*, this study contributes to the marginal work in the cultural criminological realm of ‘digital criminology’. Because “criminology has only scratched the surface when it comes to understanding how digital communication is shaping social practices” (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 170), this study aims “to integrate analyses of the social and the technological; the cultural and the structural; the intangible and the experiential” (Powell et al., 2018, p. 106). Thus, the use of a cultural and digital criminological framework provides a toolkit of theories and concepts that are discussed in chapter 3 and that ultimately position the drill phenomenon in a ‘criminology of now’.

Hence, the research problem and objectives that are discussed above provide the following research question: “*How can the symbolic use of Amsterdam drill rap by its producers and online consumers be explained through a cultural and digital criminological perspective?*”. This question is parted into three subquestions that will jointly provide the answer to the main research question:

- (1) “What audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?”
- (2) “What do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?”
- (3) “How do consumers interpret and use the symbols of Amsterdam drill in online social interaction?”

On the one hand, it is aimed to answer the research question through audio-visual analysis on 173 Amsterdam drill music videos. The music videos are approached as a subcultural artefact that communicates the symbols of the drill subculture and wider street culture. This method does not solely identify the symbols but also counts the extent to which these symbols are present. In other words, it aims to identify the symbols and their frequencies within the Amsterdam drill scene. This simultaneously answers the first subquestion by focusing on the present symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene through a cultural criminological gaze. On the

other hand, the research puzzle is tackled by conducting ten weeks of netnographic fieldwork on three different social media platforms. Through a non-participant stance, this method allows for an analysis of social interactions amongst online drill consumers in its purest form, without any distortion by the presence of the researcher. Observing online interactions and the incorporated symbols aims to procure a cultural and digital criminological understanding of how symbols are interpreted and used within digitalised networks of the drill subculture. Hence, this method answers the second and third subquestions; these social online interactions will help to uncover the meanings of Amsterdam drill symbols and how they are interpreted and used amongst online drill consumers.

The research question is designed to provide a better understanding of the local drill subculture in Amsterdam. The drill phenomenon remains relatively uncomprehended yet and its relationship with the wider street culture remains underdeveloped. A nuanced and academic understanding of drill in Amsterdam, which is one of the largest — if not the largest — Dutch drill scenes, is similarly lacking. The objective of this study is, therefore, to exploratively construct a foundation in understanding the symbols of Amsterdam drill by positioning it in a cultural and digital criminological framework. This will aid academics and professionals to better understand the local phenomenon and appropriate this knowledge to serve as a base for future research and interventions. By immersing in the experiences of online drill consumers through netnography and by thoroughly analysing the artistic performances of drillers through content analysis, this thesis describes and interprets the symbols of the Amsterdam drill subculture.

Chapter 2 will provide an understanding of drill *outside* Amsterdam by drawing upon past academic research, media articles and drill music videos. It aims to offer a full understanding of the origins of the phenomenon, so the local dynamics of this study can be situated in a global context. Chapter 3 will subsequently outline the theoretical framework by, as briefly discussed above, constructing a cultural and digital criminological lens to which the present subject matter should be understood. Thereafter, chapter 4 discusses the methodological choices, reflects on the quality of them and tackles the ethical considerations. The following chapters accordingly present the results, in which chapter 5 describes the visual symbols in Amsterdam drill production and interprets their meanings. Then, chapter 6 explains the audio symbols and their meanings within the Amsterdam drill scene. Thenceforth, chapter 7 delves into the way drill consumers use and interpret the symbols in online social interactions. Subsequently, chapter 8

will provide the conclusions derived from the discussed results and lastly, chapter 9 offers recommendations for professionals and future research.

CHAPTER 2 | STATE OF THE ART: DIFFERENTIATING DRILL

The present chapter aims to outline the ‘state of the art’ by describing the symbolic aesthetics, symbolic themes and academic literature on drill. In order to understand the roots of Amsterdam drill, it is vital to describe its musical predecessors overseas and how they accordingly shaped and influenced the local Amsterdam drill scene. As a hip hop subgenre originating from Chicago (Pinkney & Robinson-Edwards, 2018, p. 103; Stuart, 2020), the distribution of drill across the internet influenced youth across the Western world to participate in the production and consumption of drill music (Lempers, 2019). Within this diaspora, external appearances of drill rap adapt to the local context in which it is produced. The portrayed aesthetics and themes may therefore vary across dissimilar locales at different analytical levels. This chapter will, therefore, embark on the manifestation of drill in three different countries. First, the US drill scene will be explicated as the local context where the drill phenomenon originally emerged. Comprehending the contextual backdrop of the subgenre will aid to understand the subcultural roots of the external appearances in other drill scenes, such as the Dutch and Amsterdam drill scene, better. Second, drill in the UK will be outlined as another pioneering scene in the global drill movement. As UK drill has significantly influenced the local Amsterdam drill scene, a description of the UK drill scene supports an understanding of the aetiological conditions underlying the current research theme. Third, and last, the Dutch drill scene as the wider context in which the present research theme is embedded will be discussed.

All sections draw upon academic inquiry, media publications and music videos. In doing so, it recognises the spatial heterogeneity of the music genre and aims to outline how the external appearances of drill rap differ from other drill scenes on three distinct analytical levels. These levels are, namely, a national macro level, urban meso level and neighbourhood micro level. Where possible, a comparative stance between analytical levels and local contexts will be taken to address these differences in aesthetics and themes. The upcoming discussion is accompanied by QR codes linked to relevant music videos. This enables the reader to scan them with his or her smartphone and subsequently sense the music him or herself. Readers on digital devices can also click on the hyperlink that is applied to the QR code to be directed to the music video.

2.1. US DRILL: AUTHENTICITY, ALGORITHMS AND AUDIENCES

Keith Cozart, better known under his artist name ‘Chief Keef’, is consensually perceived by many authors as the spearhead who popularised the drill movement (Pinkney & Robinson-



Chief Keef
 “Love Sosa” (2012)
Chicago drill

Edwards, 2018, p. 107; Fatsis, 2019, p. 1302; Coscarelli, 2020; Lynes et al., 2020, p. 1203; Stuart, 2020, pp. 31-35). Being merely fifteen years old in 2011, the young Chicagoan, together with his peer group dubbed the ‘Glory Boyz’, amassed an abundance of views on his music videos. Simultaneously, he attracted a massive following on social media by branding himself as an authentic artist who ‘lived what the rapped about’ — frequently about being violent. Bypassing traditional music distribution channels, he

evidenced to the public that social media driven production is a novel, nonetheless extremely efficient, form of attaining success. By becoming a celebrity who cut out the intermediary businessmen in his pursuit of infamy, Chief Keef rapidly became an idol for youth who lived similar lives like him. Youngsters in Chicagoan communities — and later on in other cities in the US — attempted to attain as much success as Cozart did by producing drill music and accordingly brand themselves through social media channels (Stuart, 2020, pp. 31-39).

Despite the popularisation of US drill since the rise of Chief Keef, academic inquiry on US drill remains limited to the ethnographic work of sociologist Forrest Stuart (2020). His fieldwork produces the most extensive and full-fledged account of the lives, activities, intimacies and recurring themes of the observed drill producers and consumers than any other present inquiry on drill around the globe. As the descriptions and explanations of the mannerisms amongst drill producers and consumers are of significant importance to understanding the backdrop of the global drill subculture, an outlining of the general findings of his fieldwork will be relevant for the present thesis. Thereby, it simultaneously produces an overview of the conventions, symbols, norms, values, styles and fashions within both the Chicagoan and wider global drill subculture. By conducting ethnographic fieldwork in southern Chicago, the author positions his observations in the place where drill originally emerged. Therefore, as its originating context, an understanding of drill’s origins and its related symbols and practices is vital to understanding other global drill subculture(s) — and Stuart provides such an understanding.

In situating the socio-historical decor of his fieldwork, Stuart (2020, pp. 25-28) describes that local deindustrialisation caused many young black Chicagoan residents to have mere or no job opportunities. As a result, gangs formed and structured themselves as hierarchical drug enterprises in order to secure sufficient financial resources. However, due to extensive policing practices on gangs, the big hierarchical drug enterprises vanished and disintegrated into smaller gang factions. In these smaller gang factions, individuals were rather devoted to ‘freelance’ in

criminal activities. Nonetheless, ‘freelancing’ in the informal economy merely produced any sustainable profit. In combination with the predominant exclusion from the formal economy, many of the new generation black and southern Chicagoans turn to what Stuart calls ‘the online attention economy’. In the online attention economy “cultural producers vie for the eyes and ears of audiences” (p. 4) through the production of drill music (videos) and violent social media activity. For them, this is perhaps the only way of making financial profits and accordingly earning a living off of it. Consequently, drillers cause “gang violence [to] become a premier commodity in and of itself” (p. 11).

Although Stuart (2020) derives drill culture from gang culture and frequently refers to these drill groups as ‘gangs’ and drillers as ‘gang members’, the application of these terms in the context of the present thesis should be carefully reconsidered for its validity. An abundance of critical debates on the definition and utilisation of the term ‘gang’ within academic circles discourage its simple application. Amongst others, the most undesired consequence for the use of this term is that it has the potential to isolate and marginalise ethnic minority communities even more through a process of ‘othering’ (Smithson et al., 2013). In the context of drill, Fatsis (2020) criticises Stuart as “the use of the term ‘gangs’ [is] slightly problematic given that [it carries] negative racial(ised) connotations that are seized upon by law enforcement agencies as excuses to single young Black people out, as a threatening presence that warrants surveillance and heavy-handed policing tactics” (p. 3). Moreover, the deployment of the term ‘gang’ for certain youth groups is not always in line with the widely accepted Eurogang definition, in which “a gang is any durable, *street-oriented* youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity” (Weerman et al., 2009, p. 20). In the present thesis, the use of the term ‘gangs’ to refer to drill groups is therefore avoided as much as possible and in case it is used, its application is carefully considered and contextualised. However, as will be apparent in this chapter, the term might be used whilst discussing and rephrasing prior works and theories in order to avoid misusing contextual claims.

Despite the discrepancies between drill culture and gang culture, the identities of their communities are similarly centred around violence. However, Stuart (2020) notes that the online depiction of violence does not necessarily require involvement in physical violence as it “merely requires a convincing performance” (p. 7). Meanwhile, the gap between the performance and offline behaviour has become a novel battleground for Chicagoan drillers. In attempts to build ‘micro-celebrity’, in which the formation of an image of self is used as an online performance to increase popularity amongst online followers, drillers confirm their own

authenticity whilst publicly challenging those of other, usually more popular, drillers. Drill is, therefore, more than solely music production — some perceive it as an artistic reflection of a violent lifestyle (Dymoke, 2017).

Due to the symbiotic relationship between drillers and their friends, challenging someone's authenticity or stealing someone's *clout*¹ does not have to be directly targeted at the individual that the opponent tries to challenge. As Stuart (2020, p. 98) namely notes, he could also challenge the opponent indirectly by targeting a driller's social circle. For example, the most trusted and loyal individuals in the social circle of a driller are his 'shooters', who are "serving as his bodyguard, assistant and enforcer" (p. 93). The rest of a driller's social circle are dubbed 'the guys', who are merely "entitled to a portion of a drillers' earnings and perks" (p. 96). Challenging a driller's shooter or one of his guys is indirectly an attack on his authenticity, but also an attempt to gain clout themselves. Additionally, the symbiotic relationship between drillers and their social circle puts a certain limit on the intensification of their hyperbolic online persona through a system of informal sanctions. Producing *too* excessive online content directed towards opponents can, namely, put themselves and others in their social circle in danger as they are held accountable for each other's actions.

In trying to *steal* clout from opponents, drillers attempt to degrade their opponents' authenticity and challenge their online persona by producing a 'context collapse' (Stuart, 2020, pp. 79-80). For drillers, this means that the context of their online constructed persona is refuted by counter-evidence, accordingly degrading their authenticity. In doing so, Stuart (2019, 2020) distinguishes three instruments to challenge someone's authenticity: (1) *cross-referencing*, (2) *catching lacking* and (3) *calling bluffs*. The first instrument "refers to the process whereby challengers scrutinize and contradict their targets' online claims of violence by calling audience attention to past online content or private information that might otherwise go unnoticed" (Stuart, 2019, p. 198). Usually, this entails scouring social media profiles of opponents in order to compare current violent claims against past content and disseminating this amongst their followers. The second instrument to challenge an opponent's online persona is, as Stuart (2020) notes, by 'catching someone lacking', meaning that they are "confronted in non-gang-related situations, engaged in non-gang-related behaviors and roles" (p. 129). Concretely, this entails the act of capturing opponents in conventional roles and activities, such as errands with the family or getting the bus home from school. The third strategy refers to 'calling bluffs', in which

¹ *Clout* refers to the amount of attention someone gets, usually online attention through social media followers.

“challengers try to expose [online] displays as artifice, daring them to act on their claims” (p. 134). This entails the online documentation of them being absent on their own turf, being less armed or being less supported than the opponent initially claimed. Using their mobile phone cameras and social media, they frequently pair their bluff calling with a message daring them to act upon their pretended online persona.

Because the drill phenomenon is predominantly situated in the online domain, digital technologies shape the behaviour of drillers as well. Although, according to Stuart (2020), “they’ve learned to manipulate search engine algorithms and exploit big data analytics to attract even more clicks and views” (p. 13), they continuously encounter the “exploitative reward structure that undergirds this particular branch of the attention economy” (p. 123). By referring to Howard Becker’s (1976) famous concept of ‘art worlds’, Stuart (2020) describes that a drill music video is both dependent on, and consists of, those who conceive, provide, engage and consume it. As drillers’ productions are dependent on support personnel from other, usually more affluent, neighbourhoods or cities, they make the least money off of their own musical products. For instance, third parties that constitute ‘support personnel’ are videographers, instrumental producers² and bloggers who (re)commodify the ostensibly violent ghetto. They are simply in a better position to attain financial profits in the digital economy than drillers.

With the support of digital technologies and support personnel, consumers from over the world are able to experience drill music videos. Although the democratisation of digital technologies is oftentimes hailed, Stuart (2020, pp. 154-155) stresses that it also reinforces inequities through digital slumming practices. As an offshoot from traditional slumming, digital slumming means that digital devices enable privileged consumers to safely interact with the stereotypical ghetto residents and the accompanying transgressive and intimate experiences. Consequently, drillers are seen and used as ghetto ambassadors, sexual tourist attractions and props for middle-class respectability. Hence, drillers are aware of this type of demand that consumers favour, so they create “online content that sounds and looks a particular way” (p. 58) to gain more followers and subsequently more (potential) profits.

However, these drillers are not solely motivated by economic needs; after all, “of all their options, the attention economy is the only one that treats their background as an asset rather than a deficit” (Stuart, 2020, p. 43). The hyperbolic online depictions of reality capture more

² The exact definition of ‘instrumental producers’ and their role in the composition of a song is provided in chapter 5.

than merely materialist drives. Online infamy does not solely cause drillers to be seen and heard, they additionally have the opportunity to feel special. Moreover, the author stresses the evoked emotions amongst drill consumers as well by arguing that drillers produce intense and emotional reactions amongst their public. In other words, for both drill producers and consumers, it offers “a mean for creating, enhancing, sustaining, and changing subjective, cognitive, bodily and self-conceptual states” (Stuart, 2020, p. 180). Drillers have long been labelled by society as a menace, but they are finally able to attain global attention through digital technological developments. Accordingly, the online attention economy enables them to appropriate opposite contentions to the label that society puts on them.

Besides the ability for consumers to listen to drill songs, the music videos are an additional element contributing to the art. If the song should depict what their street life *sounds* like, music videos should depict what the street *looks* like (Stuart, 2020, pp. 67-74). Videographers from other, often more wealthy, neighbourhoods are hired as support personnel and produce videos that amplify the violent and street-like persona of drillers. In doing so, Pierre (2019a) concretely states that traditional drill music videos “could be edited and released instantly—often shot in apartments or on street corners, with the local crew pointing weapons at the camera” (para. 3). Moreover, videographers attempt to exaggerate the danger and poverty of the neighbourhoods that drillers represent through the inclusion of B-roll shots capturing the general context and setting of the video. For example, these video shots entail the incorporation of alleyways, streetlights, fences, dilapidated housing projects, dirty kitchens and dark viaduct passages that are representing the neighbourhood (Stuart, 2020, pp. 72-73).

However, Stuart’s (2020) work entails a flaw that is inherent to the ethnographic method, namely, its low external validity. Although his postulation that drillers’ off- and online behaviour is “at the end of the day, a reaction to America’s grossly unequal distribution of wealth, power and status” (p. 205), his findings remain limited to the observations based around a group of approximately thirty young men within a few blocks. As discussed earlier, drill might cause groups with a different social dynamic in other neighbourhoods, cities or countries to shape certain practices differently than his research subjects did. In other words, similar to how the earlier described socio-historical context within south Chicago is unique to its own territory, local contexts in other territories might shape the practices within drill’s subculture differently.

When analysing the contemporary US drill scene at an urban meso level, there are clear distinctions observable and hearable between Chicago drill (also known as Chiraq drill) and



Pop Smoke
 “Welcome To The Party”
 (2019)
 New York drill

New York drill — also known as Brooklyn drill (Caramanica, 2020)³. Chicago drill founded the drill movement through channelling “trap influence into darker territory via murky production and gritty lyrical content” (Koku, 2020). With around 70 beats per minute, many snares, hi-hats and bells, it was a completely new sound in the hip hop scene (Skelton, 2020). New York drill, however, discriminates from their Chicagoan counterpart by creating “a self-sustaining ecosystem with its own lingo and attitude” (Pierre, 2019b). Building on Bobby Shmurda’s 2014 hit song ‘*Hot Nigga*’, which created renewed attention towards the New York hip hop scene, upcoming New York artists were creating a distinct drill sound. According to Skelton (2020), artists such as Pop Smoke, 22Gz, Fivio Foreign and Sheff G produced and popularised New York drill as the novel soundtrack of New York. In doing so, New York drillers are “channelling the daily realities of gang culture to make extremely urgent, visceral music that was connecting deeply with their neighborhoods” (para. 26). Moreover, from a neighbourhood micro level, journalist Robinson states that “[i]t matters what neighborhood you’re in. You’re going to hear certain shit in different neighborhoods” (para. 23).

Although the lingo and themes in the songs are derived from the urban New York subculture, it took a producer from the other side of the Atlantic ocean to constitute the New York sound. With “sliding 808s, jumpy snares and sharply dissipating reverse reverbs” (Koku, 2020), London based producer ‘AXL beats’ combined Chicago drill with vocal samples of UK grime and an energetic party sound. The novel New York drill sound constituted of — as opposed to Chicago drill — an energetic mix of partying and gang life, with this atmosphere being portrayed in the related music videos as well. As soon as multiple New York artists downloaded his beats from YouTube and started rapping over them, it instantly caught the attention of consumers and artists around the globe (Pierre, 2019b; Skelton, 2020). Subsequently, popular mainstream artists such as Drake and Travis Scott even took over the renewed New York drill sound. With Pop Smoke’s songs and their related signature dances becoming the anthem for social change protestors within the Black Lives Matter movement, New York drill’s popularity increasingly disseminated across the entire globe (Giorgis, 2020; Pierre, 2020).

³ Chicago drill is frequently referred to as Chiraq drill due to the blend of Chicago and Iraq as a warzone (Pinkney & Robinson-Edwards, 2018, p. 107). New York drill is also referred to as Brooklyn drill, as the most prominent New York drillers originate from this neighbourhood (Caramanica, 2020).

The above-mentioned differences between Chicago and New York drill elucidate how the external appearances on urban meso levels and neighbourhood micro levels rapidly and increasingly become differentiated due to digital technological developments. On various analytical levels bounded territories appropriate global drill elements and subsequently adapt these symbolic aesthetics and themes according to their own local contexts. Catalysed by the Internet, these elements are continuously and reciprocally transferred between different local levels. The conflation of Chicago drill and UK drill within New York drill and the following diverse sounds throughout New York neighbourhoods illustrate this.

2.2. UK DRILL: CHINGING, CENSORING AND CENSURING



Yanko & Y.CB
"Love It" (2019)
UK drill

As mentioned earlier, drill transferred towards the United Kingdom around the mid-2010s and has accordingly gained massive popularity. As regards differences on a national macro level, "UK drill has transformed to match its new environment" (Thapar, 2017). Here, there are generally two important distinctions between US drill and UK drill. Thematically concerned, whereas US drill is mainly related to the portrayal of fire weapons, drill in the UK is predominantly concerned with the portrayal of knives (Thapar, 2017; Hancox, 2018; Ilan, 2020; Stuart, 2020). These phenomena are derived from their local conditions in which the second amendment gives US citizens the right to bear arms, and contrarily, the restrictive firearm policies in the UK lead to increasing rates of knife crimes (Thapar, 2017; Fatsis, 2019, p. 1304; Bahara & Ezzeroili, 2020). This is hearable in the *lingua franca* of UK drill where artists refer to the act of stabbing as 'dipping', 'chinging', 'splashing', 'shanking' or 'cheffing' (Ilan, 2020, p. 1002). Concerning aesthetics, UK drill's fusion with the popular mainstream genres 'grime', 'garage' and 'road rap' generates different aesthetical elements than its US counterpart (Fatsis, 2019, 2021; Scott, 2020; Lynes et al., 2020). Consequently, some UK drillers even advocate a different name for the subgenre as it sounds significantly different from US drill (Thapar, 2017).

As the musical sibling of road rap, UK drill's beats are deliberately more distorted, the rhythm is knit together by 808 drums with minimalistic instrumental melodies, the bass is excessively more present, UK drillers appear more anonymous in music videos through the use of face masks, the average 140 beats per minute make it more fast-paced and the lingo is sometimes incomparable to its US counterpart (Thapar, 2017, 2018). Thus, although the previous

subchapter noted that British drill producers have had a massive influence on the New York drill sound, there are still clear distinguishable aesthetical and thematic elements between US (and New York) drill and UK drill. Nevertheless, similar to US drill, an important component within UK drill production is the accompanying music video. However, UK drillers appear to apply the ‘no face, no case’ policy more than US drillers as they frequently wear face coverings (Bahara & Ezzeroli, 2020). Furthermore, the more fast-paced rhythm causes UK drillers in music videos to rapidly sway their hands and fingers along with the beat. In line with the centrality of knives in UK drill production, hand gestures miming the act of stabbing are another element contributing to the visual-aesthetical distinction between UK drill and US drill.

Notwithstanding the hearable and observable differences between UK drill and US drill, the mannerisms and conventions within the UK drill subculture seem rather similar. A common denominator between both drill scenes is that drill should be perceived as “a hybrid of fictional artistic expression, loose autobiography and calculated social-media-style performance” (Ilan, 2020, p. 999). As Stuart (2020) notes after a visit to British journalist Thapar, UK drillers are similarly “using social media platforms to challenge rivals, proclaim violent deeds, and build micro-celebrity” whilst the “daily production practices are rooted in the same quest to build and defend authenticity as violent criminals” (p. 202).

However, UK drillers seem to accentuate their hyperlocality differently than their US counterparts by oftentimes referring to their respective postcodes, subsequently creating ‘postcode wars’ (Ilan, 2020, p. 1005). This differs from the Chicagoan drill scene, in which general hyperlocal ‘blocks’ are represented and defended but there seem to be no or mere references towards postcode areas (Stuart, 2020). Another distinguishing element concerning the practices of UK drill culture is that they, as opposed to US drill, frequently state that running away from conflicts with opponents (‘opps’) is a violation of the subcultural norms — or ‘code of the street’ (Anderson, 1999)⁴. Therefore, “drillers vie to be the individuals who make their rivals run (‘do ten toes’), never running from challenge themselves” (Ilan, 2020, p. 1002).

Academic literature on UK drill is primarily focused on criminalisation practices towards drillers by the state and generally utilise a legal-sociological analysis of drill (Fatsis, 2019, 2021; Ilan, 2020; Kleinberg & McFarlane, 2020; Scott, 2020; Lynes et al., 2020). According to the concerned scholars, the state legally criminalises drillers through their production of music

⁴ This is not to say that this code is entirely absent in US drill. However, it appears that UK drillers generally take this code of rule as a more central element in their music and (online) behaviour.

without any evidence-based foundation to the claim that drill music directly incites violence. Based on their music being delivered as evidence in court and the assumption that their music incites violence, drillers are prohibited to enter entire postcode areas, interact with certain people, use certain words, use social media, wear hoods, possess and use unregistered mobile phones and they have their music videos being censored from YouTube by the state (Pinkney & Robinson-Edwards, 2018; Ilan, 2020; Fatsis, 2021).

Drillers are furthermore fundamentally criminalised based on their profession due to risk assessment forms prior to events that disproportionately target drill artists. In addition to the fundamental criminalisation of the state, social media activity related to drill is included as an indicator of likely gang membership or affiliation in the London Metropolitan Police Gang Matrix database (Fatsis, 2019). Amnesty International (2018, as cited in Fatsis, 2019) similarly agrees that the inclusion of social media activity related to drill leads to individuals “being profiled and monitored by police Gangs Units simply because of the subculture to which they belong and the people with whom they associate online” (p. 46). Whilst this does not solely contradict the earlier mentioned advocacy to be careful in labelling drill groups as ‘gangs’, it moreover criminalises drillers beforehand. This way, drillers are both censored and censured — meaning both the physical and digital removal from places and the severe disapproval, respectively.

Thus, as Lynes et al. (2020) note, there appears to be a scholarly consensus that the drill-crime nexus is “a complex cultural dynamic often judged too politically [whilst it is simultaneously] important to avoid reductive accounts of this relationship” (p. 1201). The provision of drill lyrics as legal evidence in UK courts and the selective prohibition for some drillers to produce or perform drill is therefore rendered counterproductive and ‘street illiterate’. Here, Ilan (2020) conceptualises ‘street illiteracy’ as the contention that law enforcement agencies are “unable to properly interpret what is being communicated by street-cultural communications such as drill” (p. 999) as they wrongly “elevat[e] internet boasts to the status of truth” (p. 1008). That is to say that the reciprocal distrust, suspicion and misunderstanding between young black Britons and criminal justice agents will solely cause practices and policies targeted at drillers that will do the exact opposite of reducing crime rates. The intrusion of digital technologies in court is not solely limited to the UK, as US police increasingly use social media as an investigation tool and “nearly half of the evidence used in gang conspiracy cases is now drawn from social media” (Stuart, 2020, p. 146). Moreover, although not explicitly conceptualised as such, signs of ‘street illiteracy’ and the continuous dynamic of suspicion between marginalised communities and law

enforcement are also found in the US context. Stuart (2020) namely states that “law enforcement personnel typically lack the cultural competencies and knowledge required to understand the cultural practices of urban youth, whether online or off” (p. 150).

Thus, whilst all academic studies on drill agree that the communication of seemingly authentic violence should not always be seen as autobiographic but as a complex exponent of its embedded street culture (Ilan, 2020), both US and UK states and media outlets frequently implicate the opposite. UK media outlets, namely, appear to position drill as the cause of (knife) violence which reaffirms the contention that young black urban men and their respective cultures are a threat to conventional and mainstream society (Lynes et al., 2020, p. 1202). Alternatively, Lynes et al (2020) argue, “it would be better suited to begin by viewing drill music as intertwined as a signifier of deep structural issues within the lives of disenfranchised youths” (p. 1213). Nonetheless, the view that drill directly leads to violence has fed into police cultures and accordingly created a feedback loop. The result of this view being embedded in a feedback loop is, according to Fatsis’ (2019) concept of ‘racial neoliberalism’, that “the state conspires to target, monitor, contain, control and cast out those who it deems undesirable or undeserving of its protection” (p. 1311) — in this case, young black Briton drillers. Ilan (2020) agrees with this contention as he states that when police try to understand drill lyrics, their meanings and their respective culture, “crime-fighting motivations and institutional racism might discourage more circumspect readings” (p. 1003).

Despite the legitimacy of highlighting the state’s criminalisation towards UK drill, its predominancy in academic literature urges it to perceive the drill phenomenon from an ivory tower. That is to say that the literature neglects to comprehensively grasp the experiences of UK drill producers and consumers. There appears to be no ethnographic, netnographic or interview-based study interacting with drillers exploring the motivations, conventions and code of conduct underlying UK drill production and consumption. Notwithstanding Ilan’s (2020) approach to reduce street illiteracy in UK drill communication, this merely focuses on the online performance that drillers construct to brand themselves. A more interpretative sociological and cultural criminological *verstehen* approach, focusing on underlying motivations and the societal embeddedness of the drill subculture, remains yet unpractised.

Whereas UK drill originally emerged in the London neighbourhood Brixton (Thapar, 2017), the drill scene has subsequently spread across various other London neighbourhoods — such as Peckham, Camberwell and Walworth — where it accordingly popularised and created its own sound (Cobain, 2018). In addition to the aesthetical differences on a neighbourhood micro

level, the rivalries between these neighbourhoods are abundant. Furthermore, the differentiation of UK drill on an urban meso level creates various other popular local drill scenes such as those in Birmingham and, albeit to a lesser extent, Coventry and Manchester (Duell, 2018; Lynes et al., 2020, p. 1203; Williams, 2020). Thus, similar to the US context, UK drill appears to entail aesthetical and thematic discrepancies on a spatial micro, meso and macro level. As opposed to US drill, UK drill more explicitly accentuates that running away from conflicts is a violation of the subcultural norms, whilst the lingo and portrayed weaponry differ between both drill scenes as well. Additionally, both audio and visual aesthetics discriminate from their US counterparts through, for instance, wearing face masks and the use of faster and bass-centred beats.

Although both the UK and US states utilise digital artefacts and drill lyrics as evidence in courts, British scholarly inquiry seems to be focused on this phenomenon significantly more than American inquiry. Academics stress the incitement of underlying socio-economic structures towards the supposed drill-violence nexus, but generally position this contention in a legal perspective. In doing so, scholars refute the claims of authorities and media outlets who implicitly and explicitly suggest a direct relationship between drill and violence. Despite that the legal criminalisation of UK drill is problematic and therefore legitimate to highlight, it urges to perceive the phenomenon through judicial goggles. Hence, it fails to grasp the lived experiences of drillers and therefore neglects the cultural criminological inclination to “locate emotions within the complexities of thought, consciousness, body, aesthetics, situation and social interaction” (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 71).

2.3. DUTCH DRILL: 010 AND 020

Shifting the focus from the UK and US to the Netherlands, this subchapter focuses on the aesthetics, themes and conventions concerning Dutch drill through — as similar to the prior subchapters — academic inquiry, music videos and news media publications. As the contextual field of the present thesis, it is vital to understand how the above-described national predecessors affected the Dutch drill scene. Since its arrival around 2017, there is a widespread consensus that UK drill influenced the Dutch drill scene to a greater extent than US drill did (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 41; Vugts, 2019; Bahara & Ezzeroli, 2020). That is to say that the earlier mentioned depiction of knives, the UK lingo, the typical ‘postcode wars’, the aesthetical sounds and visuals of music videos and the ethical code concerning the act of running away from conflicts are more or less directly copied to the Dutch context (Bahara & Ezzeroli, 2020; Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 124).



The reasons underlying the larger extent of influence by UK drill seem to be rather undiscussed in academic inquiry and media coverage. Nonetheless, the process of how UK drill introduced the subgenre to the Netherlands can be traced back to 2017, when artists of Brixton-based drill formation *67* performed on a Dutch festival and a popular online hip hop platform called ‘101Barz’ (Puna, 2017, as cited in Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 41). Whilst drill’s musical sibling ‘trap’ was at that time already an established

Dutch subgenre, the visit of *67* to the Netherlands sparked the beginning of some aesthetical and thematic drill elements being manifested within trap music. At the end of 2017, it was Gaddafi’s hit ‘*13 n*ggers in prison*’ which could be identified as the first comprehensive Dutch drill production inspired by UK drill’s aesthetics and themes. These elements are, similar to the elements described in the context of UK drill, the use of face coverings, representation of a neighbourhood, stabbing hand gestures, weapon portrayal, an ominous beat with sliding 808s and a clear readiness to use violence towards an explicitly named opponent (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 42). Whilst the aesthetical and thematic components are similar to UK drill, the political reactions towards Dutch drill differ from its UK and US counterparts. To wit, practices such as censoring, censoring and legally criminalising the music genre and its artists remain relatively absent yet (Koops, 2019; Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 138-139).

Although various aesthetical and thematic similarities are hearable and observable between UK drill and Dutch drill, it is a mistake to assume that US drill did not influence Dutch drill. Albeit to a lesser extent, Roks and van den Broek (2020, p. 56, 124) discovered that some Rotterdam drill production seems to be inspired by Chicagoan and New York drill. More specifically, the beats and ‘flow’ — meaning the ‘rhythm and rhymes’ — are sometimes derived from the US context. This is in line with the neighbourhood micro level differences inherent to the Rotterdam drill scene. Even within the demarcated city boundaries of Rotterdam, namely, there are heterogeneous external appearances found throughout various neighbourhoods inspired by UK drill, US drill, or the local Rotterdam and Dutch contexts. This evidences that Rotterdam drill experiences differences in external appearances on a neighbourhood micro level in the same manner as other local urban drill scenes.

Moreover, the authors discovered many similarities with the work of Stuart (2020) and his observations on how young drillers enter the online attention economy, communicate hyperviolence and hyperlocality, question each other’s authenticity and engage in (or refrain

from) conflicts. For instance, these practices concretely entail Stuart's (2020) three above-mentioned instruments to challenge their opponents' authenticity, the degrees in explicitly addressing opponents through lyrics, the dynamics of the online attention economy, the influence of support personnel, and experienced obstacles for youth due to their ever-lasting online footprint (Roks & van den Broek, 2020). However, this study fails to elaborately apply a theoretical and conceptual framework to their findings.

Van Vugt (2020), in the context of her master's thesis, complements this gap by studying the online behaviour and music videos of Dutch drillers. The way Dutch drillers portray an online violent identity is explored through the analytical concept of 'violent imaginaries' (Schröder & Schmidt, 2001, as cited in van Vugt, 2020). This concept entails the way symbols centred around the legitimate use of violence are transferred to others through the technical use of (1) narratives, (2) performances and (3) inscriptions⁵. Generally, van Vugt (2020) argues, Dutch drillers do this by symbolically communicating a willingness to use violence, representing the neighbourhood and portraying toughness. As opposed to the pre-digital offline construction of a violent imaginary, social media amplify the construction of this presentation of self. Concretely, this is exacerbated by contributing to a wider dissemination of the violent imaginary, having a bigger probability of others challenging it and increasing the opportunities of delivering counter-evidence for the constructed imaginary. Thus, Dutch drillers build an online violent imaginary by portraying certain offline activities but are accordingly pressured to validate their authenticity by showing that this is not merely an 'imaginary'.

Furthermore, based on empirical evidence and police reports, Roks and van den Broek (2020) state that there is no direct link between Rotterdam drill music and violent incidents. Nonetheless, the authors stress that social media use can be of significant importance in the build-up to physically violent incidents. More specifically, the audience of the online drill community can play an important role in spurring potential conflicts by actively engaging with drill artists online. For example, similar to the earlier discussed UK drill context, consumers keep 'scoreboard tallies' to count which driller or drill group scored the most 'points' through physically assaulting someone. However, the authors fail to extensively elaborate on the social dynamics amongst drill consumers, which therefore provides little insight into how youth approach the process of watching and listening to symbols in drill music videos.

⁵ A more elaborate description of the definition and contextual use of these concepts are provided in chapter 3.



Zone Drillaz RS (2019)

RS

Amsterdam drill

As the increasingly important social environment for youth, the virtual worlds of social media platforms direct the social behaviour of drill producers and consumers (see boyd 2010). A recent digital sociological study by Legerstee and Lutkenhaus (2021) on online YouTube and Instagram communities explored the relationship between the online symbolic portrayal of knives and Dutch drill through the digital infrastructure of YouTube and Instagram. The online YouTube communities do not solely engage with drill as a music genre, but as a sensationalist form of (Do-It-Yourself-like) crime journalism as well. Because drill is therefore framed as a type of entertainment, the YouTube algorithm rewards violent content with more views. In turn, they suggest that this might incite drillers to produce more explicit YouTube content and social media is therefore perceived as a “social pressure cooker” (p. 3).

On an urban meso level, Legerstee and Lutkenhaus (2021) distinguished two ‘related-video networks’ on YouTube: ‘drill 010’ (net code of Rotterdam) and ‘drill 020’ (net code of Amsterdam). This means that a user watching a video belonging to one of both networks will be directed towards other videos in the same network through YouTube’s algorithm, consequently trapping this user in a ‘filter bubble’. This means that consumers watching either Amsterdam or Rotterdam drill videos are likely to watch more videos in which the same city is represented, accordingly creating a ‘bubble’ in which users continuously encounter similar content. The content between both networks slightly differs from each other, as the Rotterdam drill network appears to be more focused on musical content whilst the Amsterdam drill network relatively focuses more on the above-mentioned sensationalist DIY crime journalism concerning drill conflicts (R. Lutkenhaus, personal communication, March 26, 2021). Furthermore, Roks and van den Broek (2020, p. 133) explicitly state that their findings solely reflect the Rotterdam drill scene. Because, therefore, the findings of their study could not be generalised to another place, a further academic exploration and understanding of the Amsterdam drill scene remain unpractised.

To conclude, this subchapter outlined how Dutch drill is aesthetically and thematically influenced by other drill scenes. Similar to the UK and US contexts, differences are observable and hearable on a neighbourhood micro level, urban meso level and national macro level. Therefore, the fragmented nature of external appearances pertaining to different drill scenes is something that one must always take into account when studying local drill practices. In the

Dutch context, the external appearances are to a greater extent retraceable to the UK drill scene, although the influence of the US drill scene should not be overlooked. On an urban meso level, the local drill scenes in Rotterdam and Amsterdam seem to be the most active and largest in their scope (Bahara, 2020).

However, as the only full-fledged academic study on Dutch drill culture merely reflects the Rotterdam drill scene, this leaves the Amsterdam drill scene unstudied yet. The discussion above demonstrated that drill should be seen as a local phenomenon that could aesthetically and thematically differ from other scenes on three analytical levels. Because, for example, the US drill scene aesthetically, thematically and conventionally differentiates between New York drill and Chicago drill, Rotterdam drill could hypothetically discriminate from these external appearances with the Amsterdam drill scene as well. Additionally, there could be aesthetical and thematic differences on a neighbourhood micro level throughout Amsterdam. Moreover, despite societal concerns towards drill's alleged influence on the normalisation of knives amongst youth (AT5, 2019; van der Krol, 2020; Diekman, 2020), academic inquiry fails to study the consumption of Dutch drill elaborately. In other words, the symbols of drill within and throughout Amsterdam, and the online consumption practices related to this symbolic presentation, remain unexplored yet. The present thesis aims to add, at least partially and as a potential fundament for future research, relevant insights on these two knowledge gaps. In doing so, it concretely aims to approach the online symbolic production and consumption within the Amsterdam drill scene from an exploratory stance.

CHAPTER 3 | DUTCH DRILL AS DIGITAL STREET CULTURE

The present discussion on the theoretical framework will focus on three interrelated fields and orientations within criminology: (1) cultural criminology, (2) street cultural contentions and (3) digital criminology. The concepts and theories related to each domain will be applied to the phenomenon of drill by referring to the knowledge of chapter 2. Furthermore, shortcomings of theories or concepts to explain certain phenomena are highlighted and if possible, it is subsequently explained how these deficiencies are compensated by other theories. Hence, it is aimed to provide a cohesive theoretical framework through the use of theoretical triangulation. Firstly, the field of cultural criminology and its relevant contentions for Dutch drill are expounded. Secondly, as drill is perceived as an exponent of street culture, the embeddedness of Dutch drill in street cultural theories and concepts are outlined. Thirdly, digital criminological concepts and theories will aid the understanding of how drill is situated in a digital society.

3.1. CULTURAL CRIMINOLOGY: SUBCULTURES, SYMBOLS AND SOCIAL BULIMIA

The publication of a collection of essays named *Cultural Criminology* by Jeff Ferrell and Clinton Sanders (1995) is perceived as the inauguration of cultural criminology (Hayward, 2016, p. 298). Their aim, at that time, was to “necessitate journeys beyond the conventional boundaries of contemporary criminology” (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995, p. 16) by moving away from essentialist and constructionist notions on the relationship between culture and crime. The establishment of cultural criminology ultimately urges criminologists to explore how culture intrudes crime in a ‘criminology of now’ (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 2). In doing so, it incorporates an interdisciplinary orientation with perspectives derived from, amongst others, social studies, urban studies, media studies, geography and anthropology. Due to its focus on subcultural meanings, representations, styles, fashions, symbols and aesthetics (Ferrell, 1999, p. 395), the use of a cultural criminological framework lends itself relevant to approach the present study on Amsterdam drill.

Cultural criminologists attempt to deconstruct conventional and axiomatic definitions in which crime is exerted by cultural defects of individuals. Rather, cultural criminology encourages us to reconsider crime as a symbolic interactionist phenomenon consisting of cultural meaning (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 27). Therefore, the new deviancy theory, which perceives criminal and deviant behaviour as a social construction with cultural meanings, is fundamental to cultural

criminology. The theory manifested itself in two theoretical strands that predated, yet heavily influenced, the construction of cultural criminology: subcultural theory and labelling theory (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 31). Without divulging the rich — and sometimes complex — developmental history of the whole cultural criminological field⁶, its relevant contentions for the present thesis are described. First, academic contentions surrounding late modern liquid societies are outlined and applied to the drill phenomenon. Second, the mediated representations of crime as a result of late modern's hyper-fluid development are discussed. Third, inspired by the influence of the new deviancy theory on cultural criminology, Dutch drill is positioned in the realm of cultural criminological contentions surrounding subcultures and their responses.

3.1.1. Liquid society

The cultural criminological field is inseparable from the paradigm of late modernism (Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 62-63). This ideology reflects on the intrusive impact of late modernity on states, societies, groups and individuals. It is an era where economic growth and hyper-consumerism are constructed and a more independent youth culture evolves. Furthermore, this era is characterised by globalisation, in which (sub)cultural diversity thrives (ibid., pp. 55-61), a risk society (Beck, 1992) and culture of fear (Glassner, 1999) was formed, signs and symbols continuously become mediated and insecurities serve as a guideline through people's lives (Ferrell, 1999). These problems collectively constitute an unstable society, in which fears, insecurities and developments continuously transfer across territories at an ever-growing fast pace. Securities accordingly evaporate and ontological insecurities become increasingly manifested (Bauman, 2000). Here, individuals start to question their cultural identity, the role of the sovereign nation-state and the overall culture(s) they supposedly belong to (Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 57-60). Thus, the 'optimism' of the modern era transformed into the cynicism of late modernity.

Hence, Bauman (2000) advocated for perceiving the contemporary era as 'liquid modernity'. Here, change is omnipresent and the sole certainty; all other aspects of life are uncertain. Life is temporary, fragile and vulnerable due to the constant process of change. Liquid societies avoid completion, stay underdefined and generally never settles. Whereas modernity, the predecessor of liquid modernity, aimed to achieve a final state of completion, liquid modernity is infinitely improving without an envisioned end goal. This is not to say that liquid societies

⁶ For an overview of the fundamental establishment of cultural criminology, its criticisms and its development, the article of Hayward (2016) is highly suggested.

are structureless, but rather forever changing in their structures. Ergo, the term ‘liquid’ refers to the anatomic nature of liquids to easily lose their shape and is metaphorical of contemporary structures.

We can see the cultural implications of liquid society’s forever changing structures and developments being manifested in chapter 2. The process in which the drill subculture adapts to the local context where the drill scene is embedded could be best understood through what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceptualise as ‘deterritorialisation’. Although this is not necessarily a cultural criminological concept, the implications of this globalising process are relevant for a cultural criminological understanding of the subcultural symbols throughout the Amsterdam drill scene. During the process of deterritorialisation, cultural practices separate from their originating territory and accordingly enter the receiving territory. This phenomenon is operated through a ‘line of flight’, where its original elements adapt according to the receiving local context as ‘glocalised’ elements. The fast pace of these developments is characteristic of contemporary liquid innovations. For example, multiple rap subgenres have rapidly emerged through this process and ultimately shaped themselves according to their own local contexts. The aesthetics and themes of the wider rap genre transfer through a line of flight to other territories in which local contexts adjust the symbolic external appearances — such as grime in the UK (Ilan, 2012), afro-trap in France (Hammou & Simon, 2018) and narco-rap in Mexico (Malcomson, 2019).

As chapter 2 described, the process of deterritorialisation does not solely occur throughout the general rap scene, but also takes place within the subgenre of drill rap. The introduction of drill to different localities causes drillers to locally use different symbols between various spatial levels. In chapter 2, the process of deterritorialisation is described on a national macro level, urban meso level and neighbourhood micro level. The subcultural diversity due to the globalisation and deterritorialisation of drill is what positions the drill phenomenon in contemporary liquid and late modern societies. The ‘deterritorialisation’ concept helps the present thesis to understand how and why the use of symbols throughout different localities in the global drill scene differ from each other. Hence, the crux is to consider the nature of the subcultural practices as dependent on the local context from which it arises. As these developments transfer at an ever-growing fast pace across territories of liquid societies, the fast dissemination of the drill phenomenon is being amplified by digital technologies across the world. The images that pertain to drill become increasingly mediated due to its digital dissemination across digitalised networks. The next subchapter will, therefore, position drill in

late modern's dynamics concerning the mediated representations of crime, violence and transgression.

3.1.2. Mediated representations of crime

The popular rise of drill is probably predictable if one takes the socio-economic conditions of late modern society into account (see Stuart, 2020, p. 3). As drill images are disseminated across networks through digital technologies, their symbolic representations become increasingly mediated. With drill images usually being centred around violence, Ferrell et al (2015, p. 10) argue that violence is never solely physical but often carries symbolic meaning. Hall (2012, as cited in Lynes et al., 2020) similarly argues that the fall of physical violence since the construction of the rule of law in the middle ages is accompanied by a rise in symbolic violence at the core of contemporary culture, instrumentally used to stimulate late modern consumption economies (Lynes et al., 2020 p. 1211). This is to say that the exciting, contested and transgressive character inherent to late modern youth cultures has not gone unnoticed by the market. Transgression and crime are accordingly commodified to serve as cultural symbols, with youth striving to hedonistically consume this fashion style (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 166). As drill's inherent nature is interwoven with — and perhaps even built on — violence, crime and transgression, the cultural criminological contentions surrounding the “commodification of violence and the marketing of transgression” (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 164) feeds into the upspring and manifestation of drill.

However, as the fundamental rule of capitalism, supply is not effective without a demand. As Lynes et al (2020) argue, “[i]f we are to construct a useful account of the relationship between drill music and violence, the first step should be to place this specific musical subgenre in the context of contemporary consumer culture” (p. 1202). The commodification of crime images causes youth to immensely consume these representations of subcultural fashions and styles. Late modern capitalist societies relentlessly stress immediate consumerism and hedonism (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 56). Individuals are in a constant state of desire for consumption in which ultimately the consumers get commodified themselves (Bauman, 2007). This consuming life produces a society of hyper-consumerism in which envy and disregard towards others' success thrive (Žižek, 2002). Chapter 2 resembles this process by describing how drill producers and consumers obsessively consume, look up to, and sometimes even envy their competitors due to their success (Stuart, 2020, pp. 128-139).

The process of commodifying drill lifestyles relates to what Mike Presdee (2000, p. 59) has famously written in *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*. He namely argues that the omnipresent commodification in late modern societies causes the intimate and everyday world to be positioned in the impersonal world of capitalist markets. This overly economically organised world produces a widespread desire for illicit pleasures that are achieved by consuming content depicting, or actively participating in, deviant behaviour. As these desires are suppressed because conventional society perceives them as deviant, individuals strive to ephemerally satisfy them by achieving an emotional state of catharsis in their ‘second lives’. In other words, consuming and participating in deviant behaviour breaks the dull routine of their everyday life and offers a momentary state of psychological relief by satisfying their suppressed desires for illicit pleasures. With drill being an offshoot of gangsta rap, Watts (1997, as cited in Roks, 2020) is perhaps therefore right in stating that “gangsta rap is neither fact, fiction nor some exotic combination, but part of an overdose of commercialized reality” (p. 602). The rise of rap music might be seen as the subcultural and musical blueprint of contemporary consumerism as it evolved and developed simultaneously to late modern consumer culture (Lynes et al., 2020, p. 1203). Chapter 2 elucidated that drillers feed into this consumerist demand as they are aware of the need to consistently produce social media content (Stuart, 2020, p. 58; van Vugt, 2020, p. 34).

Because the digital infrastructures of social media offer an environment in which a mediated identity is easily constructed and performed to others due to active participatory engagement, the willingness to depict this ‘mediated self’ might be a motivating factor for offensive behaviour in itself. This desire for representation through the use of digital technologies is what Yar (2012) conceptualises as a ‘will-to-represent’ oneself. In other words, this concept grasps the desire to construct a mediated image of self that is being amplified through the ability to disseminate this image through digital technologies to a wider public. Applied to the context of drill, Ilan (2020) notes that “[d]rill can be read as a commodification of this kind of ‘will to representation’ where being understood as a tough, uncompromising criminal *type* can lead to success in the music business” (pp. 1107-1108).

Ultimately, the above-described socio-economic dynamics underpinning the willingness to perform a mediated self are fundamental in understanding the cultural criminological concept of ‘hall of mirrors’. Inspired by sociologist Baudrillard’s (1981) famous *Simulacra and Simulation*, this concept pertains to the idea that “images bounce endlessly one off the other” (Ferrell, 1999, p. 397). In other words, the interactions between events, media and its

perceptions constantly reconstitute and redefine the mediated meaning of crime (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 151). This process is conceptualised as a ‘loop’ and might eventually be a sole element of an overall spiral in which the meaning of crime continuously moves away from its prior meanings to construct newer meanings. Thus, our experience of reality is replaced by a simulation with merely mediated signs and symbols. The boundaries between events and the representations of them are blurred, and so are the boundaries between fact and fiction (Baudrillard, 1981; Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 158-163).

Drawing upon chapter 2, the loops and spirals phenomenon becomes apparent in the literature on drill rap. Academics in the US, UK and the Netherlands similarly noted that the mediated representations and online behaviour related to the drill subculture are *performances* “and, at times, complete fabrications” (Stuart, 2020, p. 76). The signs and symbols constituting drill are spiralling away from their prior meanings, whilst the hall of mirrors causes the lines between fact and fiction to evaporate. This distinction is even a significant element valued in drill culture; drill producers yearn to communicate their supposed authenticity and absence of a distinction between fact and fiction. They aim to convince consumers that what they rap are facts and that their expressions are not fictional, consequently dismissing any distinction between fact and fiction in their music production. The drill phenomenon could therefore be seen as the archetype of these fading distinctions.

Pinkney and Robinson-Edwards (2018, p. 104) explored how UK drillers utilised social media to visualise their offline practices. According to them, the mediated representations of these practices fed back into the street in a process resembling this contention of a loop. In other words, fact and fiction are contemporarily indistinguishable as “the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street” (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 259). Moreover, the deterritorialisation inherent to the dissemination of drill resembles the wider process of a spiral. For instance, the earlier mentioned advocacy amongst some UK drillers for a different name of the subgenre is the result of a process in which the mediated meanings of these symbols were continuously reconstructed, negotiated and adapted through deterritorialisation loops. As the symbolic drill images bounce endlessly one off the other through (online) mediation, they continuously constitute new meanings whilst moving away further from its initial frame of reference in Chicago.

Conclusively, taking the social, economic and cultural conditions exerted by the late modern era into account helps to position and understand the manifestations and subcultural dynamics of Amsterdam drill in a liquid society. As the present thesis focuses on the mediated

representations of symbols in the Amsterdam drill subculture, the cultural criminological contentions regarding the mediated representations of crime are central to the present thesis. Here, images become commodified, representations become increasingly mediated, distinctions between fact and fiction become blurred and subcultures become more fluid and diverse.

3.1.3. Subcultures and responses

Inspired by the Chicago School and Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionist work, Albert Cohen (1955) might be perceived as the spearhead of the subcultural theory. Within the traditional sense of the theory, scholars focus on groups that possess other norms and values than conventional society — these groups are called subcultures. Subsequently, it is suggested that members within a subculture attempt to achieve success and recognition by displaying behaviour coherent to the norms and values of their own group. By focusing on gang delinquency amongst youth in impoverished neighbourhoods, Cohen (1955) claimed that within some subcultures deviant norms and values thrive as a product of structural exclusion from conventional society. In other words, deviant behaviour is formed by the norms and values of the subculture to which an individual belongs in contrast to the norms and values of conventional society.

Cultural criminology draws heavily on the subcultural theory, but simultaneously attempts to develop the contentions surrounding 'subcultures' into an understanding that fits the late modern sociocultural milieu by being critical to its traditional form. As cultural criminologists acknowledge that the meaning of crime is exerted by contemporary cultural dynamics, late modern cultures and subcultures are not static but rather constantly evolving and in motion (Bovenkerk et al., 2003; Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 2, 6). Hence, today's subcultures must be perceived as "fluid, porous, amorphous and transitory" (Martin, 2004, p. 31). In other words, the norms and values belonging to the subcultures are becoming increasingly vague due to late modern's liquidity, and membership to a subculture has become a fluid phenomenon because of late modern's ontological insecurity. Subcultures are, therefore, "more diverse in a late-modern world and involve crossover and transposition of values one from another [...] and they involve much change in character and membership over time" (Young, 1999, p. 401). As a result, the former postulation of simple subcultural exclusion from conventional society is replaced by a bulimic society where inclusion and exclusion occur simultaneously. Distinctive boundaries once again evaporate, but this time between inclusion and exclusion (Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 60-61). This late modern phenomenon is conceptualised by Jock Young (1999) as

'social bulimia' and describes a society that concurrently "consumes and culturally assimilates masses of people through education, the media and participation in the market place" (p. 395).

Hence, some scholars refute the significance and relevance of theories and analyses in which subcultures are perceived as independent and static entities. Late modern's increasing fragmentation and diversification of subcultures rather produces a liquid and hyper-pluralist variety of subcultures and subcultural members (France, 2007, p. 143). Within the cultural criminological realm of late modernism, the altering dynamics of subcultures altered the type of analyses of subcultures. As opposed to the traditional subcultural theory, cultural criminology tends to explicate subcultures by focusing on their symbols, style, fashion and commodification (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 100). As discussed in the prior section, the drill phenomenon is interwoven with the late modern era. Therefore, the focus on symbols and their commodification within the present thesis connects to the analytical domain of subcultures in late modernism. Observing and analysing subcultural symbols offer a useful theoretical framework in understanding the communication of signs and symbols within the Amsterdam drill scene. The present thesis aims to contribute to this cultural criminological approach to subcultures by studying the stylistic and fashionable symbols of Amsterdam drill and how these symbols get commodified. Hence, it perceives drill as a distinct subculture which, as the following paragraphs and subchapter will outline, is embedded in a wider street culture and thus, interweaves with other subcultures.

Chapter 2 examined how members of the drill subculture across the globe are, through their symbolic interactionist expression of creativity, continuously constituting cultural meanings in different forms and on different analytical levels. Constantly moving away further from their prior meanings, the drill subculture should not be seen as independent and singular, but as positioned in a fluid range of subcultures that are continuously evolving. By acknowledging that subcultures are constituted by collective responses to shared problems (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 36), the construction of the drill subculture might be perceived as an exponent of social bulimia. Indeed, as Lynes et al (2020) claim, "[d]rill music offers young people a means of expression, a means of mediating often complex social relationships and a means of achieving a degree of status relative to the social field" (p. 1203). By drawing upon the Galtung's (1969) concept of 'structural violence', Lynes et al (2020) accordingly argue that the response to this excluding force is one of inclusion in the drill subculture. Within the current study, it is aimed to detect how members of the online drill community cope with the bulimic dynamics of

subcultural inclusion and its concurrent conflation with feelings and expressions of structural exclusion.

As regards the social responses to the drill subculture, chapter 2 described how the literature on UK drill predominantly focuses on the criminalisation practices of the media and state. As evidenced by concepts such as ‘street illiteracy’ (Ilan, 2020) and ‘racial neoliberalism’ (Fatsis, 2019), the UK state is criticised for its criminalisation and labelling practices. Moreover, in a review of Stuart’s book as the only extensive academic work on US drill, Fatsis (2020) highlights Stuart’s reluctance “to discuss the criminalisation of drill music” (p. 3). As this indicates the prevalence and importance of labelling approaches within the literature on UK drill, it simultaneously illuminates the absence of labelling approaches in US drill literature.

However, as noted by Ferrell (1999, p. 333), cultural criminologists should focus on more than merely legal elements in the process of criminalisation. Rather, the notion of criminalisation is widened to focus on larger currents of ‘cultural criminalisation’. Here, the mediated meanings and social perceptions on the relationship between culture and crime are reconstructed to label subcultures as deviant outside of a legal framework. This concept encourages criminologists to explore the relationship between subcultural styles, fashions, symbols and the reconstruction of these subcultural elements as deviant. It is here, in the context of Dutch drill, where the process of cultural criminalisation becomes both amplified and paradoxical. Roks and van den Broek (2020, pp. 134-135) namely state that Rotterdam drillers attempt to create an (online) identity that is deviant, criminal and violent. Whilst they culturally criminalise themselves, media coverage simultaneously contributes to their constructed narratives of deviance. Paradoxically, and resembling Young’s (1999) contentions surrounding our bulimic world, the more drillers exclude themselves from conventional society by labelling themselves as deviant, the more they include themselves in the drill subculture.

Thus, not solely moral entrepreneurs culturally criminalise drillers; drillers similarly and purposely contribute to their own deviant image. As yet another phenomenon positioned in a ‘hall of mirrors’, the distinction between reality and the mediated representation of the deviant label becomes blurred for drillers. However, it is unclear whether the deviant performance, symbols and behaviour of Dutch drillers are impacted by secondary deviancy through mediated labelling practices or because of the socialisation of values thriving in the subculture(s) they are a member of. In other words, does the label create the behaviour, or does the behaviour create the label?

This low validity of the labelling approach has not gone unnoticed by scholars. The nature of liquid societies, where subcultural diversity thrives, contributes to the difficulty of empirically observing the potential effects of cultural criminalisation practices on deviant subcultural norms and behaviours (Akers & Sellers, 2009, pp. 156-157). Nonetheless, whether the deviant label impacts the behaviour of Dutch drillers or not, the mediated perception that society has on Dutch drillers is a cultural dynamic that is meaningful in itself. It reveals the embeddedness of Dutch drill in a late modern society and uncovers their resistance towards conventional society through subcultural styles, fashions and symbols. Consequently, it might expose the complex dynamic between simultaneous inclusion and exclusion from subcultures and societies. In the present thesis, the framework aids to explore how social bulimia might affect the symbolic external appearances, norms and values within the drill subculture.

3.2. STREET CULTURE: RESPECT, REPRESENT AND RAP

The present subchapter will explore the embeddedness of the Dutch drill subculture within late modern street culture. As will be discussed, the symbols in drill are influenced by the, albeit contested, ‘cultural toolkit’ of street culture. In doing so, this subchapter first embarks on the conceptualisation of ‘street culture’ by alluding to street cultural contentions within academic discourse. Second, the production and consumption of hip hop in general, and drill more specifically, will be positioned as an artistic enterprise within street cultural conduct. Third, the impact that digital society has on street culture will be discussed, with street culture moving away from the streets and partially displacing it into the digital domain.

3.2.1. When the street becomes cultural

Even though the term ‘street culture’ has not been used until 1995, its themes and dynamics are a phenomenon that has been under criminological and sociological scrutiny since the rise of the Chicago School (Roks & van den Broek, 2017, p. 32). There are various definitions of the concept, of which Ross (2018, p. 8) argues that a couple of the most influential definitions are those of Anderson (1999), Bourgois (2003) and Ilan (2015). Anderson (1999) namely argues that street culture refers to “a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, particularly violence” (p. 33). By stressing the notion of violence, it differentiates from Ilan’s (2015) definition of street culture as the “values, dispositions, practices and styles associated with particular sections of disadvantaged urban populations” (p. 8). With this definition stressing solely the lower echelon of society, it demarcates and determines the potential pool of

street cultural members. Ross (2018), in opposition, criticises these definitions for being too narrow. By embracing the common denominators of the most influential ethnographic-based studies on street cultures, he conceptualises street culture as “the beliefs, dispositions, ideologies, informal rules, practices, styles, symbols, and values associated with, adopted by, and engaged in by individuals and organizations that spend a disproportionate amount of time on the streets of large urban centers” (p. 8). However, I argue that this definition fails to include all actors residing in street culture. To wit, this definition considers the frequent physical presence in the streets as a necessary condition for street cultural membership. Considering the intrusion of digital technologies into our everyday lives, I argue that this does not have to be the case. Counterarguments to this contention are provided in the last section of this subchapter, which deals with the digitalisation of street culture.

The present thesis adheres to a definition of street culture that slightly adjusts the original conceptualisation of Bourgois (2003). This definition apprehends street culture as “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in the opposition to [feelings of] exclusion from mainstream society” (p. 8). Adding the words ‘feelings from’ positions the present definition in a more late modern context, where the phenomenon of social bulimia perceives exclusion as intertwined with inclusion. Therefore, it can be argued that objective exclusion from mainstream society does not necessarily produce the external appearances of street culture. Rather, subjective feelings of exclusion from society might be seen as the aetiological condition producing the constituting elements of street culture. It is moreover notable that this definition does not postulate feelings of exclusion as a conditional factor for being a street cultural member. Although the external appearances of street culture indeed emerge from feelings of exclusion, these excluded feelings are not a conditional necessity to street cultural membership. Therefore, this definition comprises an approach in which street culture is not entirely excluded from mainstream society, but actually encompasses many similarities with mainstream culture. It therefore simultaneously acknowledges the ongoing complexities and contradictions of contemporary subcultural dynamics. In other words, it recognises late modern contentions towards a bulimic society, hyper-pluralism, ontological insecurities, continuously evolving cultures and the resulting liquidity of memberships across subcultures.

The interwovenness between mainstream culture and street culture becomes manifested in Carl Nightingale’s (1993) famous ‘*On The Edge*’, a study on urban black children living in the ghetto of Philadelphia. Nightingale notes that many scholars argue that these children are alienated

from mainstream society due to a lack of culture or because they possess an alternative culture. He disagrees. Rather, he perceives it as a paradox in which their alienation is actually an embodiment of mainstream society. To compensate for the discrepancy between socio-economic exclusion and cultural inclusion, the identification with mainstream culture is emphasised. Accordingly, “[i]nner-city kids’ *inclusion* in mainstream America’s mass market has been important in determining those kids’ responses to the economic and racial *exclusion* they face in other parts of their lives” (p. 135). Indeed, the centrifugal and centripetal forces of our bulimic society become manifestly apparent in the light of subcultures emerging from exclusion. These conditions of social bulimia are fundamental in understanding the core values of street culture.

De Jong (2007), in his ethnographic study on Moroccan youth in Amsterdam New-West, describes street culture as grounded in seven core values. These values are: (1) being uncaring of others whilst standing up for oneself; (2) loyalty to one’s friends; (3) being tough; (4) showing courage; (5) being watchful of being harmed and opportunities to harm others; (6) brag about material and sexual success; and (7) possessing social skills that are considered entertaining and easy-going. Abiding by these values will produce a higher status within street culture. Scholars consensually argue that one’s status on the streets is ultimately attained through the notion of ‘respect’ (Anderson, 1999; Bourgois, 2003; Kubrin, 2005; de Jong, 2007; Ilan, 2015; Howell et al., 2019). Respect is, in Goffmanian terms, achieved by constituting and portraying a ‘presentation of self’ that is in line with the beliefs of the street cultural field (Hallsworth, 2013, p. 149). Because respect is usually earned by embodying a violent reputation, violence serves both as a means to gain respect and as an initiator for violence in the name of respect (Ilan, 2015, p. 8; Howell et al., 2019, p. 137). To uphold this violent reputation, Lauger (2012) argues that a singular act of violence does not effectively communicate a sustainable violent reputation to a wider public. Instead, one must “continuously reinforce the centrality of violence by advertising themselves as violent” (p. 121). Lauger further notes that a violent reputation “is closely linked to a broader cultural system that emphasizes hypermasculine ideals of toughness, respect and the use of violence to resolve disputes” (p. 120). Those who are accordingly seen as hypermasculine and violent are defined as authentic; these notions of ‘hypermasculinity’ and ‘authenticity’ connect one’s street cultural status, violent reputation and respect. In a similar fashion, chapter 2 explicated that the quest for achieving and maintaining an authentic hypermasculine persona, and the numerable violent

conflicts that arise within this quest, are central to the symbolic use of violence within drill culture and music.

Nonetheless, Ilan (2015) argues that street culture should not always be perceived as inseparable from crime and violence. Rather, he perceives street culture to be positioned on a spectrum ranging from weak to strong, as illustrated in figure 1. On the weaker side, street culture entails more expressive and performative appearances and practices such as fashion, street language and street basketball. These themes and aesthetics are considered ‘street cool’ and can be, supported by processes of globalisation and deterritorialisation, transferred towards broader youth subcultures, conventional cultures or mainstream fashion and conduct. On the stronger side of the street cultural spectrum individuals adhere to the ‘code of the street’, bringing the accompanying notion of violence as described above to bear.



Figure 1.- Street cultural spectrum as postulated by Ilan (2015, p. 9)

With violence being the central element within the ‘code of the street’, chapter 2 similarly outlined the centrality of violence within drill culture. The violent character of drill should be perceived as derived from, amongst other street cultural standards, this street cultural norm on the stronger side of the street cultural spectrum (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 72; Stuart, 2020, pp. 127-128). It should, however, be noted that this spectrum is in no manner dichotomous and separate; processes higher up the spectrum could fluidly influence the themes and aesthetics on the weaker side of the spectrum and vice-versa (Roks & van den Broek, 2017, p. 47). The reciprocal influence between different levels of the street cultural spectrum should therefore be substantially considered within the present thesis. For instance, symbols, fashion and other external appearances on the stronger side of the street cultural spectrum could transfer to the weaker side of the spectrum and from there flow into mainstream culture, or vice-versa. It is this interwovenness of mainstream culture and the ostensible ‘excluded’ street culture that feeds into the bulimic society. This thesis aims to position the appropriation of street cultural symbols amongst drill producers and online drill consumers on this spectrum and accordingly

perceive the symbiotic and bulimic relationship between the Amsterdam drill subculture and mainstream culture.

The external appearances belonging to street cultural symbols, styles and fashions are the fundamentals of a subcultural repertoire that is defined as ‘street capital’ (Sandberg, 2008). Inspired by Swidler’s (1986) traditional conceptualisation of a ‘cultural toolkit’, entailing all the stories, ideologies, rituals, symbols and practices shaping the behaviour amongst members of a (sub)cultural group, Sandberg (2008) notes that street capital is instrumentally used by its members to enhance their status, violent reputation and respect. Interwoven with the notion of violence, street capital is the cultural capital of street culture and is defined as “the actor’s mastery of criminal activity and violence within a street culture prescribing particular values with its own rewards, gains, profits and sanctions” (p. 157). However, with Bourgois (2003) stating that street culture is “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs” (p. 3) and Ilan (2015) arguing that “street culture is rife with complexities, contradictions and dissonances” (p. 9), both catch on the contradictory nature within street culture. In light of these inherent contradictions pertaining to street culture, the certainty of a singular cultural toolkit and street cultural field becomes contested. The conditions of liquid modernity once again become apparent through the forever changing definitions and meanings of street capital.

It is through this contention that we enter what Lauger (2012) conceptualises as the ‘paradox of legitimacy’. In this notion, derived from ethnographic fieldwork on gangs in Indianapolis, legitimacy is defined as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574, as cited in Lauger, 2012, p. 38). Because there is no field-wide consensus regarding the beliefs, norms, values and definitions that establish legitimacy, there is no singular method available that prescribes the various ways to attain legitimacy in the field (Lauger, 2012, p. 38). Consequently, in the above-described quest towards a violent reputation, authenticity and street cultural status, individuals rely on a dubitable cultural toolkit offering them no concrete and unified frame of reference or guidelines to establish the fundamentally needed legitimacy. Even though individuals might label themselves as ‘authentic’, ‘real’ and ‘legitimate’, others might disagree on the legitimacy of the reasons why they define themselves as such. Ultimately, every individual will be confronted with the complexities and problems of achieving and upholding their legitimacy for being authentic due to the beliefs of others. As an act of violence is unambiguous with oftentimes a decisive winner or loser (Anderson, 1999), frequent violent acts can be instrumentally used to

overcome the paradox of legitimacy and accordingly establish a violent reputation (Ilan, 2015, p. 8).

Although the concepts Lauger (2012) discusses are based on ethnographic fieldwork on gang culture in Indianapolis, they are nevertheless used in the present thesis to serve as a framework in understanding social interactions pertaining to cultures emerging from the streets. It perceives the symbolic interactionist dynamics as a guideline in understanding digital drill interactions but does not intend to verify nor dismiss the validity of the theories and concepts used in gang-related research. In doing so, Lauger (2012) perceives the continuous negotiation on which elements increase one's street capital as a social interactionist dynamic that is situated in a process of "constructing social boundaries, interpreting and creating meaning during social interactions, and labelling peers" (p. 4). He situates these webs of interactions in an 'intergang environment' that is defined as the assembly of gangs within a bounded territory. Within studies on gangs, drill and broader street culture, the originating or 'represented' locality of their members are a vital element in the construction of individual and group identity (van den Broek, 2013, Pickering et al., 2011, pp. 946-947; Ilan, 2015, pp. 61-81; Fatsis, 2019, p. 1302; Ilan, 2020, p. 11). For instance, chapter 2 described the incorporation of 'postcodes' in group names amongst UK drillers and Dutch drillers as a way of 'representing' these localities ⁷.

Moreover, Kintrea et al (2008, as cited in Roks, 2019) utilise the concept of 'super place attachment' to refer to the strongly experienced attachment and identification that individuals might have with the, albeit disadvantaged, neighbourhood. Consequently, these individuals do not hesitate to express and portray identifiable hyperlocal symbols related to this place. When this neighbourhood has been stigmatised for its bad reputation — a process conceptualised as 'territorial stigmatisation' (Wacquant, 2007, p. 63, as cited in Roks, 2019) — Anderson (1999) postulates that "people are likely to assume that a person who comes from a "bad" area is bad" (p. 77). The labelling of a 'bad neighbourhood' is oftentimes appropriated by street cultural members and drillers as this feeds into the 'bad' and 'violent' image they attempt to construct (van den Broek, 2013; Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 134-145). As the present thesis focuses on Amsterdam drill symbols, this conceptual framework offers theoretical sensitivity to potentially identified symbols referring to territories and localities.

⁷ For a critical examination on the phenomenon of 'represent' in Dutch hip hop culture, I refer to the Research Master's thesis of Aafje de Roest (2018).

Besides the spatial dimension of the intergang environment, Lauger (2012) furthermore identifies the social dimension of the ‘intergang field’. This concept is derived from the traditional Bourdieusian notion of a ‘field’ and is positioned in the social scientific realm of boundary work. The ‘intergang field’ namely refers to the continuous negotiation of social boundaries based on which one is deemed a ‘legitimate’ and accordingly a ‘real’ gangster. In other words, the field is constructed through numerous attempts of individuals establishing inclusive boundaries that demarcate the intergang field. In negotiating the social boundaries of who belongs to the intergang field, the ‘dilution narrative’ is commonly used to exclude individuals portraying certain behaviours, symbols and norms that are considered illegitimate. The term ‘dilution’ entails the chemical phenomenon in which the original composition of a pure substance is weakened by the combination of other substances. Metaphorical to the dynamics of this process, Lauger (2012, pp. 73-97) refers to the ‘dilution narrative’ as the expressions from peers in the intergang environment who believe that the excessive amounts of urban youth embracing ‘gang life’ caused many individuals to affiliate with a notion of ‘gang’ that is detached from the original, ideal, pure and intended definition of ‘gang’. Despite, again, the contextual use of these concepts in gang-related studies, the social dynamics that focus on the notion of legitimacy and authenticity are crucial in understanding the social interactions of online drill communities. As chapter 2 discussed the way social interactions in drill communities are centred around authenticity and legitimacy, these concepts provide a conceptual backbone in analysing the symbolic use within the drill subculture.

3.2.2. When the street becomes musical

As Roks (2020) argues that “[s]treet and gang cultures are etched into the historical fabric of rap music” (p. 271), it is essential to apprehend the aesthetics, mannerisms, styles, symbols, norms and values connecting street culture, rap music and drill music. In doing so, rap music should be understood as — amongst other activities such as breakdancing, DJ-ing and graffiti — part of the broader hip hop culture (Chang, 2005). Dating back to the late seventies in the United States, Ferrell et al. (2015) state that rap “is typically analysed as a constitutive element of contemporary black urban culture” (p. 161). Lacking economic and social capital in conventional society, Quinn (2005) argues that youth traditionally approach hip hop to use and communicate their abundance of subcultural capital — or ‘street capital’.

Besides originally being an opportunity for those marginalised to express themselves in numerous resistant ways, rap also frequently entails anti-authoritarian, hyperviolent,

homophobic, misogynistic and hypermasculine themes (Oware, 2018, p. 3, as cited in Roks, 2020). Kubrin (2005), in her ethnographic study, and van Vugt (2020) in her master's thesis, therefore argue that the 'code of the street' as conceptualised by Anderson (1999) has infiltrated gangsta rap and Dutch drill rap, respectively. In other words, the street has become musical as street cultural contentions have intruded, and accordingly interwoven with, rap's inherent themes. With the significant notion of hypermasculinity in street cultural values, Lerner and Kubrin (2021) note that hypermasculine themes in rap "include sexually objectifying women, bragging about using or selling drugs, displaying tattoos and grills, bragging about financial wealth, owning and using guns, and flaunting expensive clothing and jewellery. Rappers gain prominence and respect through hypermasculinity" (p. 24). Hip hop is therefore a convenient means for street cultural members to construct a certain street image whilst distributing this image to a wider audience (van den Broek, 2014). Throughout these themes, rappers attempt to musically communicate the authenticity of the lifestyle they claim to live — frequently that of a street or *gangsta* life (Roks, 2020, p. 272).

With the rise of gangsta rap in the eighties and rap group *Niggaz With Attitude* (N.W.A.) as its prototype, the life of black urban communities opened up for mainstream (white) American society (Ferrell et al, 2015, p. 161). Supported by technologies that enabled individuals to listen to their own preferred music whenever they wanted to, without the dependency on media broadcasts, N.W.A.'s 'gangsta rap' caught the attention of the wider American public. The violent and transgressive symbols simultaneously sparked a moral panic concerning the influence of gangsta rap on American society, with police forces trying to stop the rap group from performing (Deflem, 2020). Nonetheless, these reactions only fed into the image they attempted to construct. The subgenre namely gained most of its success according to the *perceived* authenticity of gangsta rappers, who were simultaneously questioning each other's claims on it (Harkness, 2013, p. 155, as cited in Roks, 2019) — sometimes righteously (Quinn, 2005, p. 56). This rating criterium resembles the phenomenon of what Lauger and Densley (2018, as cited in Roks, 2019) refer to as 'identity art', "in which the value of the work is judged not by its quality, but by the perceived authenticity of the artist" (p. 189). Chapter 2 explained that the quest towards authenticity is central within drill culture, with artists stressing the validity of their own authenticity whilst simultaneously confuting the authenticity of their competitors. Street culture, gangsta rap and drill rap are therefore strongly interwoven with each other through conflictual and complex social interactions, feelings of exclusion from conventional society, their violent character and the wider social reactions.

Whereas Kubrin's (2005) above-mentioned ethnographic work perceived rap as 'a message from the streets', Hagedorn (2008, as cited in Roks & van den Broek, 2020) states that its commercialisation, commodification and corporatisation also makes it "a message from the suits" (p. 142). Quinn (2005, as cited in Roks, 2019) similarly described this process as the 'commodification of Compton', referring to the city near Los Angeles where N.W.A and other influential rappers laid the foundation for rap music. Profiting from the commercial success of gangsta rap, the wider rap genre has been popularised in many countries. Its raw, transgressive, sometimes violent and supposedly authentic content emerging from the streets could be perceived as the *soundtrack* of hip hop culture and wider street culture in many late modern countries (Quinn, 2005; Rabaka, 2013, p. 7; Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 131). Youth have become attracted to the imagery of gangsta rap, appropriating the styles, fashions and symbols within their own contexts. Hagedorn (2008, as cited in Roks, 2020, p. 276) therefore notes that this gangsta identity "now influences how actual gang members, and other youth, see themselves: life imitating art imitating life in a manner that would make Jean Baudrillard proud" (p. 100). Images of gangsta rap have entered the *simulacra* realm, where "the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street" (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 259). Chapter 2 described a similar process in which the spread of drill across the globe resembles the popularise rise of *gangsta* rap. Drillers in late modern societies have become obsessed with the imagery of drill rap, appropriating them to create an artistic persona.

Ilan (2015, p. 11) perceives the commodification of gangsta rap as parallel to the process in which images and elements of street culture are becoming separated from their original context in urban poverty and accordingly appropriated in a variety of contexts and identities. Cultural industries have therefore embarked on the marketing of youth cultural products, with (gangsta) rap music as its epitome. Resembling the deterritorialisation process, Dutch youth have more or less copied the narratives of their American counterparts to utilise rap as a means for expressing themselves, creating an identity or working towards a legitimate career (van den Broek, 2013, pp. 14-15). Due to digital developments over the last decade, it has only become easier to encounter street cultural symbols and appropriate them. Digital technologies enable, support and amplify the ability to express and disseminate street cultural norms, values and practices.

3.2.3. When the street becomes digital

Earlier in this subchapter, the definition of street culture as provided by Ross (2018) was rebutted as it centred the frequent presence of physically being in the streets as a necessary element to street cultural membership. In the context of Dutch street culture, van den Broek (2013) evidenced in his netnographic study on Rotterdam youth that street culture is increasingly moving towards the digital domain. Combining this with the earlier described late modern contention of fluid subcultural memberships, the physical presence in the street should not be a necessary condition for profiling yourself as ‘*being street*’. The prefix ‘street’ in street culture is therefore not solely derived from the physical appearance of the street but is used “because the street as a physical *and symbolic* [emphasis added] space is central to understanding this way of life” (Ilan, 2015, p. 9). For these reasons, Bourgois’ (2003) earlier mentioned definition of street culture is adhered to because it poses that street culture indeed emerges from the street, but it does not require street cultural members to be physically present in the streets.

Thus, it seems that the interactions within street culture are increasingly moving away from the streets and into the digital domain (van den Broek, 2019, p. 35). Here, the online expressions and behaviours should be perceived as performances of street identity that are instrumentally used to achieve status within street culture (van den Broek, 2013; Lane, 2019; Stuart, 2019, 2020). In line with the online construction of ‘violent imaginaries’ (van Vugt, 2020), the digital artefacts created by youth within street culture provide insights into how they want to be seen. It communicates the behavioural expectations pertaining to the norms and values of communities, settings and wider street culture (van Hellemont, 2012; van den Broek, 2014, p. 35; Roks & van den Broek, 2017, p. 47). Moreover, conventional practices of youth within street culture seem to be relatively absent online (Roks & van den Broek, 2017, p. 46). This connects to the phenomenon of ‘mystification’ coined by Goffman⁸ (1959, as cited in van Vugt, 2020, p. 17) in which information is concealed from the audience to avoid potentially damaging impressions of the represented image. Simultaneously, as will also be discussed in chapter 4, these processes make it interesting and relevant for researchers to access and examine street cultural members.

Furthermore, if we assume that all online expressions and behaviour are overly exaggerated performances, this could, nonetheless, have a serious influence on the ostensible ‘offline’ street

⁸ This concept will be further expounded in subchapter 3.3.3.

culture. As a fundamental premise in this process, the Thomas theorem postulates that “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572). Digital street culture has similarly become a hyperreality that is interwoven with the physical street (van den Broek, 2013; Lane, 2019). Conflicts oftentimes arise as individuals claiming to ‘be street’ online have to authenticate and evidence themselves in the physical streets (Pyrooz et al., 2015; Stuart, 2019, 2020). This phenomenon resembles late modern’s blurring distinctions between virtual and actual realities as the beliefs and external appearances of digital and ‘offline’ street culture can not be traced back to either domain. The physical street has become digital, and the digital street has become physical.

Chapter 2 and the prior subchapter outlined how drill is inherently digital because the interactions, the construction of violent imaginaries and the music production and consumption all emerge in a digitalised environment. Because drill is perceived as a product of street culture, the dynamics of digital street culture should be considered when attempting to explain the social and cultural dynamics related to drill. To study the phenomenon of concern then, it is best suited to get to grips with its realities within the same digitalised environment (Lane, 2016, 2019; van den Broek, 2019). As opposed to traditional urban ethnographic research strategies, Lane’s (2016, p. 46) observations on youth in Harlem implied that the interactions between teens could only be studied online *and* in person. Therefore, the next chapter will provide a comprehensive outlining of digital criminological contentions surrounding the way humans interact with digital technologies to construct meanings of deviance and crime.

3.3. DIGITAL CRIMINOLOGY: AFFORDANCES, ALGORITHMS AND AUDIENCES

In contemporary society, digital technologies have become an integral and indispensable element in our everyday lives (boyd, 2014). Our experience with technologies has, therefore, transformed into a ‘technological unconsciousness’ (Thrift, 2004, 2005). Consequently, in this ‘new media ontology’, the omnipresence of social media actively shape our lifestyles, environments and social interactions (Lash, 2007). This ‘digital turn’, as described by Hayward (2010), has had a significant impact on late modern societies. It complexified the process of (mediated) meaning-making by increasingly blurring the distinction between real and imagined, fact and fiction, virtual and actual. The dynamics between human practices and technologies have been intermeshed to an extent in which an understanding of either technology or society necessitates a simultaneous apprehension of both (Castells, 2010, p. 5). It is in the realm of this ubiquitous intersection between technology and society that Brown (2006, p. 227), in her

pathbreaking article in *Theoretical Criminology*, encouraged scholars to focus on theories of the ‘technosocial’. In other words, she encouraged scholars to dismiss a binary distinction between virtual and embodied experiences, but rather perceive our experience as positioned in a human-technical hybrid network. Such an epistemological approach evades a binary distinction between real and virtual realities, which Jurgenson (2011) conceptualises as ‘digital dualism’. Instead, it encourages us to understand contemporary human relationships within and between technologies, where digital networks are not parallel to everyday life but ultimately become integral to our daily experiences (Powell et al., 2018, p. 44).

The extent to which humans interact with technologies constructs novel types of networks. To substantiate, Latour (1996) adjusts his renowned ‘Actor-Network Theory’ to suit contemporary networks; he namely argues that these networks consist of a variety of interactions between human ‘actors’ and non-human ‘actants’. This newly emerging networked environment is conceptualised by Castells (1999, p. 295) as the ‘space of flows’. Here, material arrangements enable the simultaneous occurrence of social practices without the traditional and pre-digital idea of territorial existence. As opposed to entering a location by positioning our body in a physical environment, Miller (2011, p. 3) argues that we use a digital medium to enter this space of flows. This phenomenon is conceptualised by Ferrell et al (2015, pp. 172-173) as ‘telepresence’. To substantiate, this concept explores how we transfer our sense of spatial presence in networks and environments through the use of digital devices.

To study the constitution and experience of contemporary digital society through a criminological gaze, criminologists have advocated for an interdisciplinary approach. In doing so, a digital criminology is established; “not as a new subdiscipline, but as a critical and cultural criminological orientation to crime and justice in a digital society” (Powell et al., 2018, p. 17). The above-described interwovenness between society and technologies, and the dismissal of ‘digital dualist’ conceptions, have produced concrete implications for digital criminological discourse. Essentially, ideas proposing that technologies one-sidedly create opportunities for crime — a paradigm defined by Powell et al (2018) as ‘techno-criminal determinism’ — are rebutted. Rather, the digital criminological enterprise seeks to understand the relationship between technologies and crime as interdependent and reciprocally influenced by each other. It seeks to understand the criminological implications of technosociality.

Hence, the digital criminological orientation is well suited to get to grips with the Dutch drill phenomenon. The positioning of symbols concerning Dutch drill in the online attention economy calls for a digital criminology that stresses the social and cultural implications of

contemporary digital technologies and their networks. The present subchapter aims to explicate the application of the digital criminological orientation to the digital realms of Amsterdam drill. In doing so, the first section embarks on the nature of the technological components that construct the digitalised space. The second section subsequently embarks on how humans interact with and through these technological components. The third and last section theoretically perceives this interaction of humans actors through and with technological actants via a dramaturgical gaze.

3.3.1. The nature of affordances

Whereas the physical environment is constructed by atoms varying in colour, size and weight, online platforms consist of bits without such varying characteristics. Consequently, and in line with contentions surrounding the space of flows and late modernity, bits can travel at a fast pace and easily submerge with each other (Negroponte, 1995, p. 14). The fundamental characteristics of this digital infrastructure are the foundation of social interaction in the digital domain. They produce networked publics, which boyd (2010) defines as “publics that are restructured by networked technologies” (p. 39). The definition of ‘public’ within this concept is twofold. Whilst it draws upon the imagined collective constructed through the conflation of human practices and technologies, it simultaneously refers to the spatial dimension inherent in networked technologies (Varnelis, 2008, p. 15). The cultural dynamics underpinning networked publics vary from other types of publics as “the ways in which technology structures them introduces distinct *affordances* [emphasis added] that shape how people engage with these environments” (boyd, 2010, p. 39).

As opposed to atoms, bits enable networked publics to search, store and disseminate cultural artefacts easier and in dissimilar ways than in the physical domain. Consequently, these ‘affordances’ provide a conceptual framework for understanding how the ‘techno’ influences the ‘social’. In doing so, boyd (2010, p. 46) originally differentiated four affordances: (1) *persistence*, pertaining to the automatic recording and archiving of online expressions; (2) *replicability*, referring to the duplication of content; (3) *scalability*, relating to the wide visibility of content; and (4) *searchability*, concerning the accessibility of content through search functions. Furthermore, in successive literature, three additional affordances are discussed, in which the (5) *visibility* of networked publics describes the ease of visualising initially invisible information; the (6) *editability* highlights both the asynchronous ability to edit formerly posted content, and the enablement to thoughtfully craft a message before distributing it; and the (7)

association outlines the ability to associate with other users and with the available content (boyd, 2014; Ellison & Vitak, 2015). As will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, an apprehension of the digital components that constitute affordances is vital for understanding the subcultural dynamics within networked publics of drill. Acknowledging how affordances shape technosocial behaviour supports a better understanding of the interpretation, use and dissemination of Amsterdam drill symbols. As will be discussed in the following methodological paragraph, these affordances also constitute the research location and are therefore vital in understanding the technosocial reality.

3.3.2. The use of affordances

Although affordances impact online behaviour in networked publics, they do not determine behaviour. Contrarily, the online behaviours of users co-construct the affordances perpetuating throughout networked publics. In other words, although the infrastructural environments of digital platforms are invariable and determine the options for social interaction, the affordances are reciprocally relational and relative to their users (Bucher & Helmond, 2018, p. 5, 28). Therefore, we should be wary to not succumb to ‘technological determinism’ in which our cultural values are solely determined by digital technologies (Wyatt, 2008). As members of the drill subculture are taught to interact with algorithmic actants for their own interests, they additionally learn to creatively interact with the affordances, their opportunities and their limitations (cf. boyd, 2010, p. 15). Because networked publics are the research location of the present thesis, the discussed dynamics between their affordances and users offer a fruitful framework in understanding the underlying reasons for certain online behaviour. It simulates to take account of how digital infrastructures underpinning online platforms are co-constructed, appropriated and utilised by their users, and how they accordingly turn back to affect online expressions. Hence, the use of digital affordances by drill producers and online consumers shape the way subcultural symbols are used online. Therefore, the present section aims to provide a theoretical backbone for exploring how Amsterdam drill symbols are used and interpreted through networked publics. It perceives the symbolic use of online drill communities as affected by the technological components of these digital drill realms.

The bits pertaining in these digital drill realms are, in line with the ‘persistence’ affordance, automatically stored in datacentres across the world. Relating to the ‘scalability’ affordance, the digital artefact will be visible and easily accessed by a wide audience. As users are subsequently able to extract these bits and send the original, reproduced or edited digital artefact

forward towards others, the ‘replicability’ affordance offers the understanding that content can be duplicated and dispersed further across the global web. Within the space of flows, Castells (1996) conceptualises the omnipresence of digital artefacts as ‘timeless time’ in which “a mixing of tenses [...] create a forever universe” (p. 463). Contributing to the phenomenon of ‘timeless time’ and ‘forever universe’ is the ability of digital artefacts to ‘go viral’, meaning that they spread “rapidly through social networks as hundreds of thousands, even millions, of users replicate and distribute the original posts” (p. 26). Thus, digital artefacts have a permanent character and can subsequently virally spread across networked publics due to the persistence, scalability and replicability that digital platforms afford.

In the context of drill, chapter 2 discussed how virality is often pursued by drillers in order to achieve ‘clout’ — or ‘attention’. However, scholars studying drill are also warning for the social implications that the conflation of virality with the ‘forever universe’ might provide. Stuart (2020), in his ethnographic study on Chicagoan drillers, describes the harmful individual experience of these implications as the attainment of “sticky reputations” (p. 139). Permanent online reputations restrict drillers from achieving turning points in which they desist a violent and criminal lifestyle, even though drillers might experience an ‘awakening moment’. In the realm of life-course criminology, this moment entails an impetus or realisation to desist in criminal or violent activities. In other words, because drillers’ online reputations are frequently violent, the ‘timeless time’ of digital artefacts and the ‘forever universe’ of networked publics complicate the turn towards a non-violent and conventional life course. Roks and van den Broek (2020, p. 134) similarly argue that the performances portrayed by Rotterdam drillers might produce long-lasting consequences due to the permanent character of digital content. For youth, it could be difficult to distance themselves from their portrayed image as digital content of their past performance might come back to haunt them.

The above-described affordances of replicability, scalability and visibility are characteristic of a novel form of information acquirement, production and distribution in a digital society. Whilst traditional media stories are still produced, audiences are able to respond and accordingly become more involved in mediated events. As opposed to pre-digital times, the affordances constituted by digital technologies offer users the ability to not merely consume, but also to produce and further disseminate content and symbolic meanings across networked publics as ‘prosumers’ (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). The concept of ‘prosumption’, as a portmanteau of ‘production’ and ‘consumption’, allows us to understand that digital audiences are not a ‘passive internaliser’ of pre-fixed meanings through traditional media anymore. Rather, social

media users have now received active participatory engagement in mediated meaning-making processes (Yar, 2012, p. 248). The rise of the ‘prosumer’ produces a collapse of traditional hierarchies and asymmetries between producers and consumers (Comor, 2011; Schneider, 2016). Chapter 2 similarly described the rise of Chief Keef as the archetype of a novel form of social media driven music production, bypassing traditional music distribution channels and cutting out ‘the middlemen’ in his pursuit of online infamy. Because the present thesis focuses on both drill production and consumption, it is vital to understand that social media users might simultaneously participate in both activities. It supports an understanding of how drill producers and consumers — or rather prosumers — use, interpret and further disseminate the meanings of Amsterdam drill symbols through the use of digital affordances. In doing so, they perform a certain digitalised persona that is perceived by a wide audience.

3.3.3. Digital presentation of self

The earlier mentioned concept of ‘will-to-representation’ (Yar, 2012) heavily inspired Surette’s (2015) contemporary conceptualisation of ‘performance crimes’. Performance crimes, being criminal acts committed in order to be witnessed by an audience, are not novel phenomena. However, what is new in contemporary digital society is the distribution of performance crimes to a wider audience through digital technologies. Hence, through this concept, Surette (2015) perceives the spectacle of recording and disseminating transgressive digital artefacts by applying a ‘dramaturgical’ framework inspired by the renowned sociologist Erving Goffman (1959). His theory on ‘the presentation of self’ is an established and increasingly popular theoretical framework to analyse online meaning-making, expressions and behaviour (Hogan, 2010, p. 377). In the traditional sense of the theory, Goffman (1959) explains human social interactions through the imagery of theatre, in which individuals present a ‘frontstage performance’ via ‘impression management’ to convince an ‘audience’ of a certain ‘image of self’. Whereas performances in a pre-digital society are adjusted to the expectation of the social roles amongst the perceiving audience, online performances in digital societies erase the heterogeneity of daily performances in front of multiple audiences. Rather, a singular online performance is digitally portrayed to multiple audience groups due to the earlier described online affordances of ‘scalability’ and ‘visibility’ (Hogan, 2010, pp. 379-381). Thus, performance crimes can now be witnessed by a homogeneous and wide ‘digital super public’. Consequently, the potential to be witnessed by a broad audience creates an impetus to perpetrate performance crimes and disseminate these acts through networked publics (Surette, 2015).

Inspired by Goffman's (1959) work, van Vugt (2020) adds more dimension to the dramaturgical theory by applying it to the online presentation of self amongst Dutch drillers. According to her, Dutch drillers use the dramaturgical techniques of (1) 'mystification' through concealing information from the audience; (2) 'dramatic realization' through stressing initially unnoticed aspects that confirm or amplify the desired performance; and (3) 'idealization' through portraying a performance that fits the ideally expected image and evading counter images to avoid confusion. Through performances, narratives and inscriptions, these techniques are deployed to perform a certain impression management on digital platforms. Of particular importance in the present thesis is the semiotic and dramaturgical concept of 'inscriptions'. This term namely refers to "graphic acts and the marks resulting from them" (Streeck & Kallmeyer, 2001, p. 465); in other words, it covers the symbolic meaning, understanding and communication of both concrete visual acts and material objects (Van Vugt, 2020, pp. 12-13).

Scholars researching the online and musical expressions of drillers are convinced that they do not only use performances to authenticate their desired personas. Contrarily, they also construct a presentation of self to brand and commodify themselves in a social media driven music industry (Ilan, 2020; Roks & van den Broek, 2020; Stuart, 2020). Pinkney and Robinson-Edwards (2018) additionally draw upon the concept of 'performance crime' to explain the manifestation of violent symbols used in UK drill music. As chapter 2 described, drillers are pressured to perform the same performance throughout all of their social roles, whilst competitors attempt to find and disseminate counter-evidence to dismiss the authenticity of this performance by catching them in conventional roles. When succeeded, the context of their 'always-on' performance is dismissed; scholars refer to this process as a 'context collapse' (Stuart, 2020, pp. 79-80). This means that the singular social role that individuals portray online collapses as they are captured in a contextual setting that does not match their performance.

The digital presentation of self may also be seen as a sort of 'memetic deviance'. Here, the fast-paced dissemination of deviant practices through networked publics offers the joy of partaking in a collective movement over time and place (Powell et al., 2018, p. 99). In this sense, the emotions evoked during the production of drill music may contribute to a sense of 'belonging'. Indeed, Stuart (2020) argues, "[o]nline infamy not only allows these young men to be seen and heard; it also allows them to finally feel *special*" (p. 122). For the present thesis, it is vital to understand that online Amsterdam drill production is essentially a *performance* that simultaneously negotiates the subcultural norms and symbols. Taking the dramaturgical conceptions in digital societies into account, the symbols identified during the present thesis

should be perceived as inseparable from the act and phenomenon of digital performances. Furthermore, motivations underlying the identified symbols might be attributed to the desire of constructing an online identity — or ‘violent imaginary’. The concepts of ‘will-to-representation’, ‘performance crimes’ and ‘memetic deviance’ therefore support an understanding of how and why Amsterdam drill ‘prosumers’ use symbols to perform a digital presentation of self.

CHAPTER 4 | METHODOLOGY

The present chapter aims to discuss the methodological process of the present thesis. The methods deployed are functioned to answer the main research question, which is: “*How can the symbolic use of Amsterdam drill rap by its producers and online consumers be explained through a cultural and digital criminological perspective?*”. The research question is parted into three subquestions which, after combining all findings, will provide the fundamentals to answer the main question:

- (1) “What audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?”
- (2) “What do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?”
- (3) “How do consumers interpret and use the symbols of Amsterdam drill in online social interaction?”

This chapter will outline the methods, their suitability to the posed research problem by connecting them to the subquestion(s) and accordingly reflect on the methodological quality and ethical considerations. Hence, first, it will discuss the audio-visual content analysis and the procedure of selecting, collecting and analysing 173 music videos. Second, the netnographic research method is explained and it is described how it is applied to the present research design. Third, I will reflect on the quality of the methods by discussing my position as a researcher, their reliability and their validity. Fourth, I will discuss additional methodological considerations that are external to my position as a researcher, the reliability and the validity. Fifth, and last, ethical considerations are outlined and the present thesis is positioned in the realm of the newly developing ethical standards of online research methods.

4.1. DRILL PRODUCTION: AUDIO-VISUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

In understanding and describing the Amsterdam drill scene, it is vital to focus on the main art of concern: drill *music*. Dutch drill music videos are uploaded to YouTube on a weekly, maybe even daily, basis (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 43). Criminologist Gabry van der Veen (2009, p. 391) argues that visual data are important for criminological research because they both reflect social reality and can have real factual consequences; a phenomenon which is elaborately discussed in the prior chapter. Moreover, she argues that visual material which is produced for non-research purposes might be useful in studying the criminological meaning of a phenomenon, in which the description, meaning and interpretation are central elements to take

into account. The notorious drill music videos are therefore rich in data that are relevant for cultural and digital criminological analysis.

Content analysis is described by Berelson (1952) as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). Here, the manifest content relates to what can be directly experienced. Inspired by Freud’s (1913) psycho-analysis of dreams, manifest content relates to the elements of actual phenomena within a dream. As opposed to the latent content which entails the underlying meanings, manifest content is ‘the tip of the iceberg’ of which people only see what is above the surface. In other words, manifest content consists of the objective signifiers that could be experienced through the use of senses, as opposed to the signified meanings that are subjectively rooted in the latent content. Notable in the conceptualisation of ‘audio-visual content analysis’ is the differentiation between two senses: hearing and seeing. Individuals communicate manifest content by lyrically or visually sending them to the receivers. Banks and Zeitlyn (2015) provide insights on how to read visuals in three steps: first, the researcher looks and then describes what he or she sees. The second step, then, is to “move beyond the content and consider the image as an object” (p. 3). Therefore, the researcher must ask why, where, when and by whom are these visuals captured? Third, the visual analysis must be embedded in the social-scientifically relevant context of the present study. In this case, what are the criminological relevant symbols in the present analysis? This process inspired the present research design in analysing visual content and the related symbols. However, as will be explained in this subchapter, these steps could also be applied to audio symbols.

As the present research question focuses on the symbolic use of Amsterdam drill producers, these symbols are best suited to be identified through content analysis. Therefore, the present thesis applies audio-visual content analysis to a total of 173 Amsterdam drill music videos. The music videos are approached as an analytical entity that communicates subcultural styles, fashions and symbols. In doing so, analysing the manifest symbols of Amsterdam drill music videos answers the following subquestion: “*What audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?*”. Drillers are, to draw upon the above-mentioned definition of Berelson (1952), communicating symbols that could be manifestly, objectively, systematically and quantitatively analysed through content analysis. It is, therefore, not solely aimed to identify symbols, but also to count the extent to which these symbols are used. This will provide a better understanding of the underlying dynamics of the symbols, but also how ubiquitous they potentially are. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the analysis of *manifest* content also

constructs the foundation of discovering the *latent* content, entailing the meanings of the symbols. In terms of Ferdinand de Saussure (1959), the *signifiers* lay the foundation of identifying the *signified*. Here, the former term refers to the manifest sign that one could experience, whilst the latter term refers to the meaning that is attributed to the signifier. But before this process takes place, the symbols should be identified and accordingly analysed through audio-visual content analysis. Hence, the procedure of this method will be detailly described in the following three sections that, chronologically, outlines the selection, collection and analysis of the data.

4.1.1. Selecting the data

The selection of music videos to audio-visually analyse will be centred around three criteria. The first criterium is that the music video must predominantly include audio-visual themes and aesthetics of drill that are discussed in chapter 2. These are, for instance, ominous beats, hyperviolent symbols and lyrics, the portrayal of weapons, calling out opponents, claims on certain neighbourhoods and specific street language terminology. It has to be noted that I was dubious on some occasions whether I could classify some music videos as ‘drill’. I have always carefully considered whether to include a case in the selection of data by taking the knowledge concerning drill themes and aesthetics of chapter 2 into account. It is furthermore aimed to attain a satisfactory understanding of each drill group. Therefore, the second criterium is that the concerned drill group must have more than three music videos available to analyse. This does not apply to artists who do not affiliate with a drill group; in this case, one music video will suffice as this will occur less frequently. The third, and last, criterium is that the artist in question must in some way refer to ‘representing’ or ‘coming from’ a spatial territory inside the municipality of Amsterdam. Such information can either be derived through lyrical references to this territory or by making explicit visual references to the concerned area.

All relevant artists, drill groups, their respective represented territories and conflicts that are encountered during the process of retrieving cases were written down. This offered me a sense of the actors and underlying networks of the Amsterdam drill scene. Simultaneously, this proved to be a fruitful enterprise in understanding musical references of drillers towards other drill artists or groups during the content analysis, and the expressions and references of consumers during netnographic fieldwork. It also helped me in setting up the Amsterdam drill map that is presented at the end of the thesis. The next section will elaborate further on how the process of data collection was executed.

4.1.2. Collecting the data

The music videos were accessed on YouTube, as this is the platform where they are predominantly posted and consumed. During the process of data collection, it was aimed to collect all music videos that hold true for each above-described selection criterium and to accordingly transfer the cases into a database. Because the research location is positioned online, the affordances as described in chapter 3 can be used to the advantage of the present study. Hence, YouTube's digital infrastructure creates five instrumental techniques that are used to collect data.

The first technique is, in line with the 'searchability' affordance (boyd, 2010), through utilising YouTube's search option. Here, I can navigate between drill videos quickly and accurately by searching 'Dutch drill', 'Amsterdam drill', or the respective artist, group, or song names. The second technique is based on the fact that amongst drill music videos, hashtags are frequently used to refer to the drill group of a performing artist. In the example in figure 2, #EDG refers to the Dutch drill group *Elke Dag Geld*, and in the example of figure 3, a song name is preceded by the hashtag #DUTCHDRILL. If a user clicks on the hyperlink, he or she will be redirected to popular videos with the same hashtag. This way, videos from this particular group or drill scene are presented and more relevant cases could be collected according to a specific artist, a specific drill group or the general Dutch drill scene. A third technique is by scanning the channel from which the music video is posted. In the example of figure 2, the channel is '7even 3', which refers to drill group *73 de Pijp* of which a performing artist on the song is a member. On the channel pages, there are usually more drill music videos to collect as the channel might be managed by a record label, is a general distribution channel for a driller or drill group(s), or it is a popular channel providing drillers with a platform to perform so-called 'freestyles' or 'cyphers'⁹.

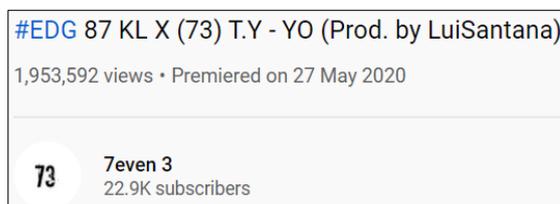


Figure 2.- Valuable information for data collection below a Dutch drill music video

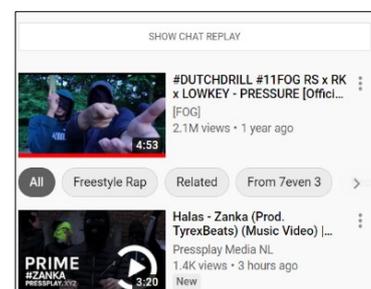


Figure 3.- Recommended section next to a YouTube video

⁹ Freestyles are singular songs or multiple short songs combined which are uploaded on an established platform and that has an explicit focus on rapping many 'lines', usually without a chorus. Cyphers are a song where multiple artists are collectively performing on one, usually relatively long, beat. These are also uploaded on established platforms.

A fourth technique of collecting cases is by, as can be seen in figure 3, the recommended section on the right side next to the music video. Here, YouTube's algorithm provides recommended videos to watch based on the individual watch history of the user, including the function to sort them based on related keywords. Again, the interaction as a researcher with non-human 'actants' is used to the advantage of the present thesis. By using a YouTube account solely intended to watch videos for this study, the algorithm aids the process of finding new relevant cases. Such a strategy to collect music videos might be seen as a creative way of 'algorithmic sampling'. A fifth way of collecting music videos through YouTube is, in line with the 'association' affordance described in chapter 3, through the 'subscribe' option. By subscribing to relevant YouTube channels that regularly post Amsterdam drill music videos, it enabled me to stay updated on new releases during the process of data collection. Novel cases could also be encountered during the netnographic fieldwork as described below, in which consumers discuss upcoming and recent releases.

The process of data collection ended when 'saturation' was reached and, therefore, no new relevant cases within the categories of the three selection criteria could be found (see Mortelmans, 2009, p. 121). With the data being saturated, the cases were set to be analysed. However, first, a few refinements to the pool of cases were made. Considering the process of storing cases per drill group, a song can be performed by artists from multiple drill groups and therefore exist as a duplicate case. The duplicate case will be removed at the file of the drill group(s) of which the performing artist(s) are in the minority, and otherwise at the drill group that is appointed by a random number generator. This aims to support the true randomness in the process of appointing cases to analyse.

Hence, the appointment of cases to be analysed will be executed according to a semi-random selection process. That is to say that the eight most viewed music videos per drill group are being selected, and seven other music videos per drill group are randomly appointed through a random number generator. By deliberately incorporating the eight most viewed music videos in the sample, it is aimed to enhance a focus on the underlying dynamics of why certain music videos are viewed more. This might provide insights into the symbols that the majority of drill consumers desire to see and what symbols are commodified. If a drill group has less than fifteen music videos online, the total amount of available music videos of that group will be analysed. Furthermore, in the rare occasion that a driller does not affiliate with a drill group, a maximum of three music videos per individual driller will be analysed. Ultimately, this led to the appointment of 173 music videos, presented in the music videography included in the reference

list at the end of the thesis, in which the audio and visual symbols are separately analysed. The next section will elaborate on this analysis procedure.

4.1.3. Analysing the data

This section will describe how the collected music videos are analysed. To recite the definition of content analysis by Berelson (1952), it entails “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). Two elements within this definition are vital in understanding the present approach to audio-visually analyse the selected and collected content: (1) the manifest content will be *objectively* and *systematically* analysed, and (2) the results will be *quantitatively* expounded. This section will chronologically discuss the operations of these two elements in the context of analysing the audio-visual content. In doing so, it aims to answer the following subquestion: “*What audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?*”.

First, the analysis is objectively and systematically conducted as the same research instrument is used to analyse all music videos, subsequently enhancing the reliability of the research design. This is realised by an inductive approach, in which all encountered audio and visual symbols were separately written down during a process of watching and hearing an unidentified number of music videos from the pool of cases prior to the sampling process. The procedure of writing down the symbols had a cyclical character, as the symbols were continuously refined to grasp the best definition of the various visual and audio appearances. Inspired by the first step in the methodological approach of Banks and Zeitlyn (2015) to *read* visuals, I intended to describe everything I saw and heard, independently of what I initially thought to be relevant. In other words, I aimed to objectively collect all the audio and visual symbols in one coding list, which could be metaphorically seen as a symbolic blueprint of Amsterdam drill music videos. Subsequently, the audio and visual symbols were separately grouped based on their analogous themes. The result of this process is a separate coding list for 147 visual symbols and 127 audio symbols that are presented in appendices 1 and 2.

Second, although the process of inductively watching, hearing and describing the music videos is positioned in the qualitative research realm, the analysis of the results is quantitatively grounded. The music videos are analysed according to the same coding list, in which the presence *or* frequency of audio and visual symbols in the music videos are identified. To wit, if it is considered irrelevant to count certain symbols, then solely the presence of these symbols are incorporated in the coding list. Otherwise, the symbols are counted *per* ‘shot’ and *per* ‘line’.

A ‘shot’ pertains to a singular visual fragment with a clear beginning and end before it moves to another visual fragment. Here, it is not relevant if the symbol is portrayed multiple times in one shot; the operation of counting visual symbols in the present thesis is, therefore, dependent on *how many ‘shots’ portray the concerned symbol at least once*. For instance, when a pistol is portrayed three times in one shot, the frequency of the symbol ‘pistol’ is counted solely once. The same methodological contention holds true for audio, as it is counted *how many ‘lines’ portray the concerned symbol at least once*. Here, a ‘line’ refers to a sentence that is bounded by the rhythm and the rhyming scheme — or ‘flow’. This rule of analysis is implemented to avoid the overrepresentation of symbols due to its overly repetitive presentation within multiple ‘shots’ or ‘lines’.

The coding list is filled in with a pen on printed paper. The ability to watch YouTube videos in slow motion, as illustrated in figure 4, allowed me to observe the music videos with a reduced speed (0,25x) and subsequently pay close attention to what is objectively portrayed in a shot. Whilst listening, I regularly had to play the music video back to clearly hear what has been said. Because the chronology of using both senses may involve bias whilst analysing with the latter sense due to the knowledge of the former sense, I evenly distributed the two potential chronologies. That is to say, half of the analysed music videos are first heard and then observed, whilst the other half of the analysed music videos are first observed and then heard. The results are subsequently digitalised in an SPSS database with a total amount of 306 variables. Amongst interval variables, meaning the variables of symbols that are counted, the values are corrected for the amount of time of the music video. In other words, the interval values of the observable

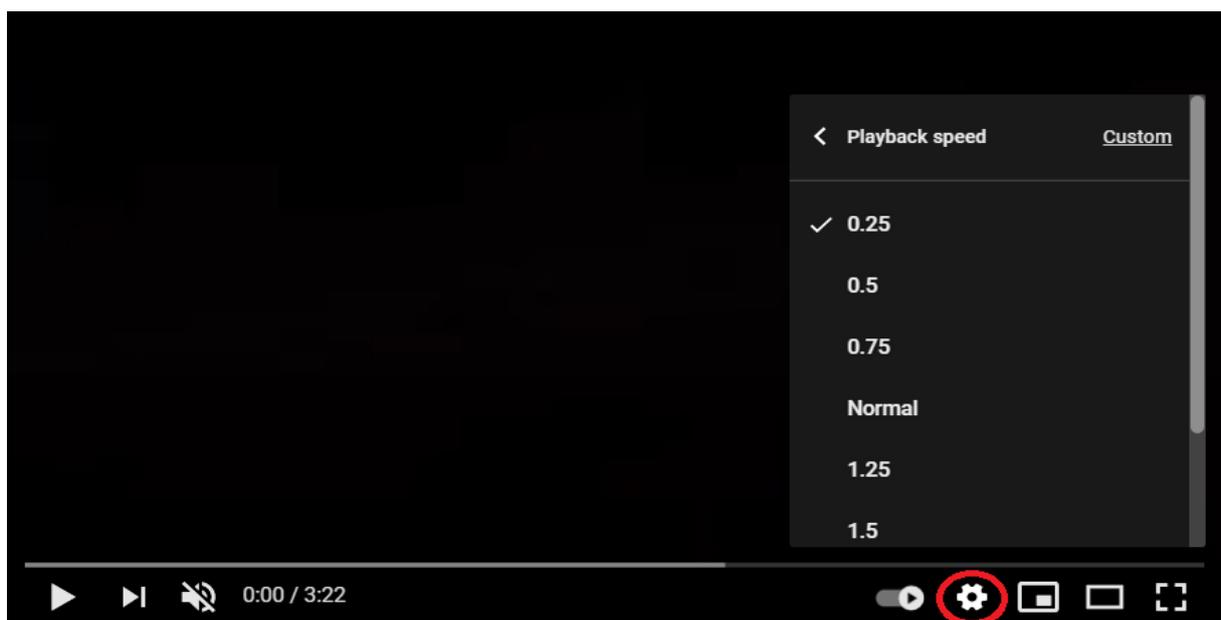


Figure 4.- Ability on YouTube to reduce the speed of the music video

and hearable symbols are similarly levelled to represent the same amount of time. This is because the likelihood that a symbol occurs more in a music video that is relatively long in time is bigger than a music video that is relatively short in time. This is done according to the following formula which is applied to every interval variable:

$$\text{weighted variable} = \text{initial variable} * \frac{\text{total amount of seconds of concerned music video}}{\text{mean amount of seconds of all music videos}}$$

Ultimately, indexes are created dependent on the thematic congruence of both audio and visual symbols. For instance, the weighted values of symbols related to money are combined in an index to construct an overall value of how many times money is symbolised, both through audio and through visuals. Whilst, therefore, the initial analysis remains close to the objective, natural and manifest appearances of the portrayed symbols in music videos, the indexes constituted of *weighted* values transfer the analysis to a higher epistemological abstraction level. In other words, the initial empirical analysis focuses on the factual symbols whilst the construction of indexes enable categorical, conceptual and comparative analyses. The exact variables constituting all indexes are presented in appendix 3. As a result, 36 ‘test variables’ are formed that jointly constitute the guiding analytical framework for analyses supporting thick descriptions, mutual comparisons through T-tests, correlation tests and regression effects. The test variables predominantly entail indexes, but a few singular variables based on their independent importance are additionally incorporated as a test variable. The 36 test variables are ordered based on their congruence and accordingly presented in table 1.

Thus, the incorporation of indexes in the analysis stimulates more general statements on a higher abstraction level about the entire Amsterdam drill scene. Furthermore, it contributes to the ability to make comparisons between city districts and drill groups to support the construction of the Amsterdam drill map at the end of this document. By creating dichotomous dummy variables for each Amsterdam drill group and city district in the SPSS database, fruitful insights into the characteristics and nature of each distinct entity in contrast to the aggregation of the residual Amsterdam drill scene are provided. As a result, the definitive SPSS database consists of 173 cases and 560 variables.

Additionally, I kept a memo notebook with interesting insights during the analysis. This supported me to make more in-depth and theoretical interpretations of the symbols and variables. In doing so, I have written down interesting fragments of music videos that could be

applied to theoretical notions. During the interpretation of the data, I have reviewed the memos and applied a more interpretivist perspective on the statistical data to avoid overly positivistic interpretations. This allowed me to take be more critical and reflexive. The avoidance of reductionist interpretations proved to be a fruitful enterprise in combining the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Table 1.- Descriptive overview of all 36 test variables

<i>Weapons</i>	<i>Physical violence</i>	<i>General street culture</i>
Weapon portrayal dichotomous	Index violence	Index dances
Index weapon portrayal	Index physical assault	Index money
Knife portrayal dichotomous	Index knives and stabbings	Index authenticity claims
Knife portrayal frequency	Index firearms and shootings	Index police aversion
Firearm portrayal dichotomous	Shooting someone (lyric)	Index sex
Index firearm portrayal	Stabbing someone (lyric)	Index weed consumption
	Stabbing hand gesture	Index fashion
		Index alcohol consumption
		Index group affiliation
		Index locality affiliation
		Explicitly mentioning own neighbourhood
<i>Illegal economy</i>	<i>Unaddressed insults</i>	<i>Provocativeness</i>
Index illegal economy	Index insults	Index threats
Index stealing	Index opp avoiding conflict	Index commanding silences
Index swindling	Index challenging authenticity	Explicitly addressed diss
Index drugs dealing		Mentioning undefined enemy neighbourhood
		Mentioning defined enemy neighbourhood

4.2. DRILL CONSUMPTION: NETNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

Chapter 3 examined the digital criminological embeddedness of Dutch drill and argued that research on this phenomenon should be positioned in the same technosocial field. To study the use of symbols amongst online drill consumers, defined as *individuals who participate in online interactions that are centred around the subject of drill*, a netnographic approach is applied. Netnography is a method of online “data collection, data analysis and data interpretation”

(Kozinets, 2019, p. 7) coined by Robert Kozinets in 1995. Originally, in the early years of Web 2.0 and its inherent user-generated content through social media, he defined netnography as “a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through electronic networks” (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62). Kozinets (2010) differentiates netnography, through the support of digital affordances as discussed in chapter 3, from traditional ethnography in four ways: (1) different linguistic communication (use of *emojis* and abbreviations such as ‘lol’); (2) ever-lasting accessibility of the internet; (3) maintenance of the digital shape of data in analyses because the material *is* already digital; (4) and the potential for anonymity amongst both researchers and research subjects.

Chapter 3 argued that a technological unconsciousness, or new media ontology, thrives throughout contemporary digital societies (Lash, 2007). Nowadays, youth incorporate digital technologies as an omnipresent element in their social lives (boyd, 2014). Hence, digital (sub)cultures and communities do not simply *emerge* — as Kozinets’ 2002 definition proclaims — through electronic networks. Contrarily, contemporary technosocial communities are now predominantly *situated* online; this is evidenced by the digital criminological discussion on street culture in chapter 3. Kozinets (2015) therefore states that the netnographic method entails “voyeuristic quality” (p. 88) because it enables the study of situations, conversations, phenomena or interactions which otherwise would be difficult to study ‘face-to-face’. Moreover, hailed for its “unobtrusive and noninfluencing” (Pollok et al., 2014, p. 2) nature, netnographic research enables the study of communities without the researcher being (all too) present. This observational, non-participant, stance has also been described as a “specialized type of lurking” (Loanzon et al., 2013, p. 1576). This approach has been applied in many economic and social netnographic studies (see Beaven & Laws, 2007; van den Broek, 2013; Lane, 2019; Roks & van den Broek, 2020), but is yet to be ethically and methodologically developed in a more advanced manner (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 158).

Hence, the easier access to the studied communities and the ability to adopt a non-participant stance causes the netnographic method to be relevant for application in the present thesis. It allows for the study of symbols without interruption or distortion by the presence of the researcher through, for instance, socially desired expressions. In doing so, it aims to answer the following subquestions: “*what do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?*”, and “*how do consumers interpret and use the symbols of Amsterdam drill in online social interaction?*”. In the above-mentioned definition, netnography enables the study of two

types of research groups: cultures and communities (Kozinets, 2010, 2015). Although chapter 3 discussed that some scholars are ambiguous on the exact definition of the former, and to a somewhat lesser extent the latter, it is vital to concretise which cultures and communities are studied in the present thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 alluded to the contention that those participating or affiliating with street- and youth culture are the main purveyors of drill consumption. Because these research subjects are *situated* online, and social interactions between them are for the vast majority on social media platforms, it is only accommodating to study the drill subculture through netnography. However, the question which accordingly arises is which communities within this subculture should be studied, and maybe more importantly, where do we find them? The upcoming subchapter will tackle this research puzzle by describing the process of data selection. Thereafter, the procedure of how the data are collected and analysed will be explicated.

4.2.1. Selecting the data

The present thesis is interested in the portrayed symbols within online interactions amongst youth who are centring their social interactions around the Amsterdam drill subculture. The online platforms serving as the research location of the present approach entail Telegram Messenger, Instagram and YouTube. Together with Snapchat, these platforms serve as the predominant digital places for social interaction amongst youth participating in the Dutch drill subculture (Hamdiui & van den Broek, 2019; Roks & van den Broek, 2020). However, due to the digital infrastructure and its pertaining nature of affordances, Snapchat does not offer the ability for outsiders to perceive much of the social interactions amongst drill consumers. Therefore, this platform is not included as a research location in the present thesis, but the other platforms are contrarily included due to the ability to perceive the social interactions amongst online drill consumers. The following paragraphs will describe how human beings interact with the different digital infrastructures related to the each distinct research location.

The technical infrastructure of Telegram entails a messaging app on smartphones, tablets and computers affording users to search for various group conversations regarding a diverse range of subject matters. It is moreover attractive for those involved in criminal activities as it offers a considerable amount of anonymity (Roks & Monshouwer, 2020). Every individual with an internet connection on a mobile phone, tablet, PC or laptop can enter a group, but can also watch its content without being a member of the group itself (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 157). On Telegram, there are many group chats in which youth from all over the country discuss drill

feuds, the authenticity of drillers, new and upcoming releases, personal and artistic information of drillers and overall peripheral matters regarding the Amsterdam and Dutch drill scene. An abundance of conversations occurs every day in these drill groups, with member counts of group chats rising to more than 1,000 members. For the above reasons, these group chats are well suited to ‘passively’ observe communities centred around the consumption of Amsterdam drill and, therefore, serve as the most dominant platform on which the present netnographic method is conducted.

Instagram is a platform used to share pictures and short videos that can be ‘liked’ or commented on. Users have much control over how they present themselves to the online world. Considering the knowledge of chapter 3, Instagram therefore predominantly reflects how users want to be seen by others through their ‘impression management’. Youth see their profile as a ‘front stage’ on which they can present themselves through pictures and videos. Users can *follow* each other so their content will be posted on their timeline, but can also access the content of accounts they do not follow if the account is publicly available. Hence, users have the option to either restrict access to their content for those who are not following them or to publicly show their content to every user and non-user approaching the platform (Hamdiui & van den Broek, 2019). For drillers, Instagram is also a platform on which they can present themselves as an artist or, to put it in more cultural criminological terms, as an embodied commodity by promoting their music and their lifestyles (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 7). The platform’s infrastructure enables users to comment on drillers’ pictures and videos and accordingly respond to other comments. Consequently, discussions below drillers’ digital content offer useful insights on reactions to, and the use of, symbols in interactions throughout the online Amsterdam drill community.

YouTube offers a platform where drill music videos are uploaded and commented on. Due to its relatively transparent nature, every user with an account can comment and ‘like’ videos. Because YouTube’s digital infrastructure predominantly centres around the content of the uploaded videos, the focus is less on the profiles of its users (Hamdiui & van den Broek, 2019). As the digital place where drill music is distributed, the comment sections offer an opportunity for youth to discuss the audio and visual symbols used in the concerned music videos. Moreover, chapters 2 and 3 provided the insight that music videos offer a means to communicate a certain street image. As a reaction to this performance and in line with the discussed phenomenon of ‘identity art’, chapter 2 examined how individuals in the comment section question the authenticity and specific claims communicated in the music video. It is therefore vital to incorporate the social interactions of Amsterdam drill consumers on YouTube

and accordingly focus on their responses and utilisation of symbols within online social interactions.

4.2.2. Collecting the data

In line with the earlier described concept of ‘telepresence’ (Miller, 2011; Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 172-173), my smartphone and laptop were used as a digital means to environmentally position myself in the present research locations. In other words, my position as a researcher is located on the same above-mentioned digital places with similar affordances as the studied communities. Over the course of my fieldwork, I have become a member of the following ten Telegram group chats¹⁰: ‘Pressplay Media NL’, ‘DRILLERSVANNL ’, ‘DRILLERSVANNL ♂ (oude)’, ‘24previews’, ‘DRILLCHAT’, ‘LeakTune ’, ‘ – Silentleaks’, ‘Drill Leaks NL’, ‘●hardestblocks●’ and ‘grote gezeit’. On the one hand, I encountered these group chats by approaching the search function and accordingly search for terms such as ‘drill’, ‘Dutch drill’ or ‘drill NL’. On the other hand, I familiarised myself with these group chats through other group chats in which they were promoted.

Moreover, I have created an Instagram account named ‘amsterdrill’ on which I have followed 167 accounts of Amsterdam drillers or other accounts that are related to Amsterdam drill through a process of ‘snowball sampling’. By scouring the additional information below a YouTube video, or by scouring other Instagram profiles, I attempted to *follow* every Amsterdam driller that was identified during the phase of data collection in content analysis. When another account was relevant to follow, for instance because it offered a considerable amount of information on events in the Amsterdam drill scene, these were followed as well. The YouTube account that was utilised to analyse the music videos for content analysis was additionally used to access the comments below Amsterdam drill music videos.

Over the course of ten weeks of netnographic fieldwork, ranging from 23 February 2021 to 2 May 2021, I have opened and read every message in the Telegram group chats on a daily basis. The number of messages ranged from approximately 600 messages to 4000 messages per day. Due to this abundant amount of social interaction, Telegram was the platform that I approached the most during my netnographic fieldwork. Furthermore, I have watched and read every Instagram ‘feed post’, ‘story post’¹¹ and comments of users on the accounts that I followed. In

¹⁰ The names of the group chats are subject to change. These are the names of the group chats as of 5 June 2021.

¹¹ A ‘feed post’ refers to the post of a picture or video that is permanently visible on the concerned account, unless removed later (see ‘digital affordances’ in chapter 3). A ‘story post’ is a post that is visible for 24 hours.

addition, the entire comment sections of 46 YouTube music videos have been read. These music videos were randomly selected with the use of a random number generator on the pool of 173 music videos that were selected for the content analysis. Concretely, three music videos per drill group with seven or more available music videos were randomly selected. Moreover, one music video per drill group with six or fewer available music videos, and one music video per driller who does not affiliate with a drill group, have been randomly selected to observe.

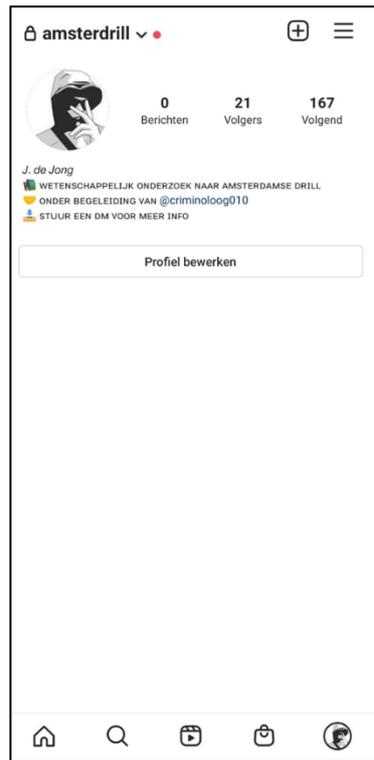


Figure 5.- Instagram account used for netnography

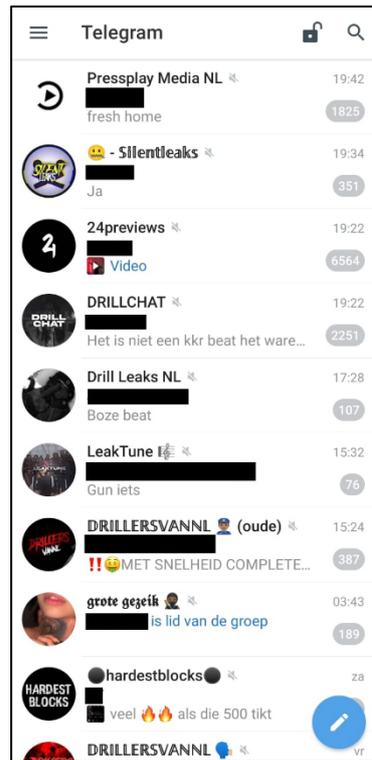


Figure 6.- Overview of followed Telegram group chats

The ultimate and explicit aim of data collection was to focus on the symbols inherent in online social interactions and expressions amongst Amsterdam drill consumers. Therefore, it answers the following subquestion: “*how do consumers interpret and use the symbols of Amsterdam drill in online social interaction?*”. During observational fieldwork in the above-mentioned digital places, screenshots have been made to archive relevant and insightful comments and social interactions. As the research design focuses on the use and interpretation of symbols in Amsterdam drill, I initially focussed on social interactions in which Amsterdam drill and Amsterdam drillers were discussed. As will be examined in the following section, the sole focus on Amsterdam drill in the netnographic method proved to be problematic. Therefore, the results of netnography should be perceived as wider in its scope than merely Amsterdam drill and could be generalised to the wider Dutch drill scene.

Furthermore, inspired by the Grounded Theory approach, the motives for *screenshotting* a digital artefact are derived from my theoretical sensitivity as a researcher (see Glaser & Strauss, 1978). This means that the fundamentals of the netnographic method consist of the acquired research skills throughout my education and the knowledge produced by the research on drill literature, theory and methods presented in chapter 2, chapter 3 and chapter 4, respectively. This knowledge aided me in perceiving online social interactions and expressions through a more abstract and conceptual epistemological gaze. In other words, as opposed to deductive approaches in which it is aimed to test empirical hypotheses based on existing theoretical knowledge, the data have been inductively collected through a *supporting* conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework. The screenshots were accordingly archived on the internal storage of my laptop and the online *cloud*. The digital artefacts were ordered by naming them according to a number sequence, which had the practical function of tying screenshots pertaining to the same conversation together. As a result, a total amount of 2,582 screenshots were taken, in which 1,663 screenshots were taken on Telegram, 526 screenshots on YouTube and 393 screenshots on Instagram.

4.2.3. Analysing the data

As opposed to quantitative analytical methods used in the content analysis of music videos, there is no singular procedural description on how to analyse qualitative data. Whereas the quantitative content analysis relies on the computing power of the software programme SPSS, qualitative analysis solely relies on my creative skills as a researcher (Decorte, 2009, p. 464). Nonetheless, the software programme Nvivo is utilised to support the analysis of the netnographic fieldwork. In doing so, during the phase of online fieldwork, all digital artefacts are sequentially transferred to Nvivo as data to analyse.

First, during the process of open coding, all data are examined and fragments of the digital artefacts are coded according to their phenomenological and conceptual congruity. By deriving theories and conceptual insights from the data, the overall goal is to produce universal claims based on specific cases in the data. It is notable that in the coding process, screenshots were not sequentially coded after all the definitive data was collected. Rather, data analysis occurred simultaneously with the process of data collection. This approach stimulated the cyclical and reflexive nature of analytical induction, and supported the conceptual focus and theoretical sensitivity during data collection. By constantly comparing prior codes based on new cases, this

cyclical process functioned to increasingly refine conceptual and theoretical propositions (see Decorte, 2009, pp. 482-483).

During open coding, reflexive memos on insightful contentions derived from the data were extensively used. By comparing former to newer memos, I consistently reflected on my role as a researcher within the process of data collection and data analysis. It moreover supported and stimulated to consistently reflect on potential categories amongst the developing codes. At the end of the open coding process, the codes were becoming increasingly refined. As this enabled the arrangement of codes into definitive categories and subcategories, the subsequent process of 'axial coding' offered more structure and levelled the conceptual abstraction grade. Similar to the open coding procedure, the construction of categories and subcategories also involved a 'constant comparison' approach in which the categories were redefined, removed, or newly created to refine the definitional coverage of the conceptual categories. The definitive coding list eventually consists of 283 codes, with 23 main codes. The conclusive coding phase of 'selective coding' subsequently examined the relationships between the categories, subcategories and singular codes whilst the results were ultimately able to be postulated (see Decorte, 2009, p. 492).

4.3. RESEARCH QUALITY

In this subchapter, I will reflect on the quality of the above-described research procedure. In doing so, I will first reflect on my position as a researcher. Thenceforth, I will discuss the reliability and validity of the methods. In general, it is aimed to provide an overview of the qualitative strengths and potential shortcomings of the methods deployed.

4.3.1. Personal research position

Hence, first, I will reflect on my position as a researcher within the present study. The choice for this research theme is grounded in my academic and personal interest in urban life, street culture and hip hop. As chapter 1 described that the drill phenomenon is extensively covered in mass media, the intersection of actuality, criminological research and my personal interests quickly led me to be intrigued by the present topic. I was surprised by the discrepancy between the small amount of research and the large amount of media and political attention towards the subject matter. It left me wondering if the considerable amount of attention was lacking a sufficient understanding of the nature and dynamics of this subculture. Although I am an avid listener of hip hop, I similarly did not understand much of the drill subculture. Hence, I decided

to adopt an explorative approach that aims to understand the symbols of Amsterdam drill. My personal interest in hip hop might have contributed to being biased towards overly romanticising drillers, but I am confident in the objective interpretation of data through the construction of my research design. The audio-visual analysis, for instance, was grounded in manifest symbols that one could not ignore to see or hear. On the contrary, I even believe that my personal interest in hop hip has helped me to fathom and position the meanings of certain encountered expressions or practices in the wider street- and hip hop culture.

Because I am conducting this research as a part of an internship at an organisational branch of the municipality of Amsterdam, it offered me sufficient insights into the institutional views on drill. This has helped me to explore the above-mentioned potential discrepancy between the understanding of the drill subculture and the attention towards it through media coverage and political debates. Simultaneously, this supported me in formulating the recommendations based on the present research. It should be noted, however, that no conflicts of interest have arisen during my research internship and that the research has been conducted independently, without the intrusion of any interest by the municipality of Amsterdam or other third parties. I never experienced distortion during my research because I was, for whatever reason, entangled in professional, normative or ethical dilemmas. Moreover, because I never met or spoke to my research participants, and because many individuals I encountered were unidentifiable or anonymous, I did not come across any conflicts of interest due to emotionally loaded social relationships with my research subjects. Overall, I did not experience any issues during the research procedure because of my anonymous and non-participant research position.

Although I embodied the role of a passive ‘lurking’ researcher, I regularly had the feeling that I was part of a group of friends who invested a considerable amount of time in consuming and discussing drill. I increasingly became familiar with the lingo, norms, values and modes of conduct within the wider drill community. As I invested an extensive amount of time conducting online fieldwork, I even caught myself copying the narratives and lingo in my personal life. The fact that I have become so invested in the subcultures and communities of Dutch and Amsterdam drill aided me to answer the following subquestion: “*what do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?*”. By positioning the symbols of Amsterdam drill in the context of online narratives, I became sensitive to what the symbols mean to youth. This simultaneously provided me with the benefits of methodological triangulation. To substantiate, the lingo communicated in Dutch drill can be hard to fathom, even for an individual who perfectly speaks Dutch. Before I started analysing the music videos,

I was confident in my knowledge concerning the Dutch street language. Since a young teenager, I have listened to a variety of national and international hip hop on a daily basis. Hence, I familiarised myself with street language and experienced the development of it by regularly listening to these songs. However, whilst inductively constructing the coding list for the content analysis by watching Amsterdam drill music videos, I soon discovered that — although a vast amount of street language was indeed incorporated in drill — the lingo was oftentimes distinct from the more ‘general’ street language that I possessed. I experienced trouble in deciphering some words, but the netnographic fieldwork provided me with the context in which certain terms were deployed. I quickly learnt more and more about the meanings of some terms, and therefore I broadened my ‘cultural toolkit’ (see Swidler, 1986). This has helped me to ensure an improvement in the quality of my work through a better understanding of the symbols.

Moreover, I deployed another technique that supported me in ensuring the quality of interpreting the music videos. I did this by applying the cultural criminological inclination to focus on “sensual and emotional dynamics” (Katz, 1988, p. 4) to my role as a researcher. To wit, I stimulated my senses through the use of a few embodied sensual techniques. As the present chapter outlined the division between audio and visuals, I attempted to block out my other senses and accordingly stimulate either my vision or hearing. Concretely, that means that when a music video is analysed in the instance of hearing, I shut my eyes, tried to be in a room with no strong smells and got in a comfortable position without eating or drinking something. In the instance of observing, the same conditions were implemented but then without any surrounding sound, and if necessary with earbuds. Moreover, whilst inductively constructing the content list, I discovered that speaking out loud what I saw and heard supported me in identifying symbols that may otherwise likely go unnoticed. I tracked the progress of stimulating my senses and other methodological concerns in a ‘methodological logbook’, which contributed to a more reflexive stance. By reflecting on my methodological choices, I experienced an impetus for my creativity and determination during the quite monotonous process of detailly analysing music videos. This chapter will now continue to discuss the reliability and validity of both methods.

4.3.2. Internal reliability

Internal reliability refers to the extent to which other coders would produce similar results from the same data; this is also referred to as ‘intercoder reliability’ (Maesschalck, 2009, p. 144). As regards the audio-visual content analysis, I possess the knowledge of what symbols relate to

specific variables on the coding list because I inductively constructed the list myself. Although I am confident in my objective analysis of the data, other coders could potentially feel lost in the maze of variables included on the coding list. Without explanation and practice on what visual and audio elements pertain to which symbols, the coding list could be misunderstood and misused. A potential solution to this issue is that other researchers independently construct a comparable coding list based on their own inductive empirical approach. Moreover, as discussed in the prior section as well, the lyrics can sometimes be difficult to understand and the articulation and recording quality is not always clear. As I attained the knowledge of the lingo and narratives through an extensive analysis of music videos and netnographic fieldwork, this problem was resolved. So, if the background information of the coding list is provided or the coder constructs a coding list him or herself, and the coder would be familiar with the narratives and lingo communicated in Amsterdam drill, the results coming from the data would likely be similar. As was intended and discussed, the collection of data remains close to the objective audio and visual manifestations. Moreover, the use of indexes within the present research design would compensate for any discrepancies in which another coder would code a different variable that yet pertains to the same symbolic category.

In contrast to the internal reliability of quantitative research methods, the qualitative variant of the rating criterium is more difficult to guarantee because I, as a researcher, am the only research instrument (see Maesschalck, 2009, pp. 144-145). Whereas the content analysis consists of a constructed content list with concretely observable and hearable symbols, there is no singular and concrete instrument aiding the procedure of netnographic fieldwork. Hence, it is vital to describe the methodological choices and clarify what is meant by the results. It is therefore aimed to describe the process in which raw data are transferred to conceptual and analytical causal relationships as detailed and clear as possible in the result chapters. Distortion by misinterpreting the studied phenomena — and therefore their pertaining causalities — is due to the copyability of the digital artefacts in their original form less sensitive than, for example, the interpretative nature of traditional field notes and interviews. Moreover, as will be discussed in the subchapter on ethical considerations, I do not divulge and publicise my raw data. Nonetheless, because I structurally archived and ordered the digital artefacts, it is possible to — under ethical circumstances — view and discuss the data with other researchers. This could potentially enhance the ‘inter-rater reliability’ inherent to the internal reliability of the present method.

4.3.3. External reliability

The external reliability pertains to the replicability of the method, in which a study with the same research design would produce the same results with new data (Maesschalck, 2009, p. 146). I am confident that the external reliability in the present thesis is strong. The methodological procedures of both methods are explained as detailed as possible, and there were no obstacles in attaining access to both types of data as they were relatively easy to access. Although encountered data of the netnographic method, which consist of unique social interactions, is more unique than the type of data within content analysis, the open accessibility of the studied communities would likely produce similar insights. Furthermore, as regards the content analysis, the size of the samples covers a considerable amount of the objective amount of cases. Therefore, as opposed to the netnographic method, the data in a novel study with the same research design would probably be relatively similar. Consequently, this diminishes the likelihood of discrepancies between this study and the results of another study with the same research design due to different cases in the replicate study. Moreover, I have described my methodological choices as detailed as possible whilst providing examples to concretise the process, consequently making it possible for other researchers to replicate both methods. Thus, I would argue that the external reliability of the present study is relatively strong because the research design could be easily replicated and the approached data are predominantly accessible. Potential discrepancies concerning the results of the replicate study could be derived from contingent disparities in the collected data. However, I consider the likelihood to be relatively low.

4.3.4. External validity

This discussion leads us to the external validity, which entails the extent to which the results can be generalised to situations and cases outside of the current study (Maesschalck, 2009, p. 141). Because of the considerable sample proportion in respect to the objective total amount of Amsterdam drill music videos, and due to the random sampling technique, I am confident that the external validity of the content analysis within the bounded research area of Amsterdam is strong. However, the conceptual process of deterritorialisation that is manifested in chapter 2 would potentially cause other localities to produce different results. Therefore, the findings of the present thesis could only be generalised to the Amsterdam drill scene; further research on other drill scenes would be required if it is desired to make more general claims. As will be discussed in the recommendation sections, the research design of the content analysis is well suited to be applied to other contexts as well. Consequently, extending the database would

provide fruitful insights for other drill scenes. In line with the analytical spatial levels discussed in chapter 2, an extension of the database could also enable additional comparisons on an urban meso level and national macro level.

As regards the external validity of the netnographic method, three elements are significant to discuss. First, as Lane (2016) indeed states, “[t]he best ethnographic research is done at the intersection of both [traditional ethnography and netnography]” (p. 5). Nonetheless, he also argues that it depends on the nature of the posed research question which method may be more applicable. The present research design lacks urban ‘traditional’ ethnography, potentially problematising generalisations to ‘offline’ behaviour and expressions. However, the ‘technosocial’ nature as discussed in chapter 3 teaches us that we should dismiss any distinction between virtual and ‘real-world’ experiences, consequently rendering this generalisation issue irrelevant. The digital nature of drill described in chapters 2 and 3 make the digital variant of ethnography well suited. Second, the netnographic research design is located on three different social media platforms. As chapter 3 discussed, online behaviour is partly shaped and stimulated by the digital affordances that the platform’s infrastructure offer. Therefore, online behaviour on other social media platforms could differ from the three platforms that are included in the present study. Ultimately, generalisations of claims towards other digital platforms must be taken into careful consideration due to their unique digital infrastructure and nature of affordances. Future research could explore the online behaviour of drill consumers on other social media platforms such as Clubhouse and TikTok, despite being used less by youth in the drill subculture. Third, the netnographic fieldwork paid special attention to reactions on, and interactions centred around, symbols and narratives pertaining to Amsterdam drill. Nevertheless, it was practically impossible and inconvenient to demarcate online behaviour concerning Amsterdam drill because the vast majority of online interactions and behaviour was centred around the general Dutch drill scene. The netnographic study is therefore mainly focused on online behaviour pertaining to Dutch drill, of which Amsterdam drill is a part.

In academic discourse, some scholars dismiss the traditional idea of generalising qualitative results to a wider empirical research population. Rather, generalisations of qualitative data towards two distinct matters should be discussed. On the one hand, the external validity of qualitative research is adjusted to make *theoretical* generalisations in which cases are generalised to theories. In other words, the cases are not selected because they are representative of a research group, but because they are representative of a theory (Maesschalck, 2009, pp. 142-143). The cyclical process described above, in which cases are continuously refined based

on new cases, render the theoretical generalisation of the present study consequently strong. On the other hand, scholars refer to ‘case-to-case transferability’ as an adjusted variant of quantitative external validity. The task of the researcher is to report ‘*thick descriptions*’ of the cases so the reader can apply the same case to his or her own study. This is to say that generalisations to other cases are conducted by the reader instead of the author. It is therefore aimed to apply detailed thick descriptions on cases in the results section by presenting the original (anonymised) screenshot as the case of concern. This way, the reader can apply the cases of this study to his or her own study.

4.3.5. Internal validity

Lastly, internal validity refers to the extent to which the method proposes trustworthy causal relationships (Maesschalck, 2009, p. 139). By applying statistical analysis on 173 cases, it is aimed to propose statistically trustworthy statements and relationships. As the present audio-visual content analysis stays close to what is objectively *seen* and *heard*, and peripheral data such as the number of views and upload dates are concretely accessible, the statements of causal relationships are as trustworthy as the competence of my analysis skills and the computing power of the statistical software programme. Here, it should be noted that, as self-evident in quantitative analyses, careful attention is paid to the confidence intervals and significance levels of statistical claims.

Moreover, triangulation with different methods could support the trustworthiness of causal claims. It is aimed to avoid overly positivistic interpretations of quantitative data by critically reflecting on the statistical numbers through a more interpretivist gaze. By verifying what is priorly stated through the deployment of another method, the strength and trustworthiness of analytical and theoretical statements can be invigorated. I would render the internal reliability of the present research design strong due to the rich benefits that are produced through methodological triangulation. Although qualitative research methods usually refrain from making causal claims and rather focus on describing phenomena, the netnographic method nevertheless strengthens the causal claims of content analysis. It provides a better understanding of the latent meanings behind the manifest symbols of content analysis by offering a more *verstehen* and descriptive interpretation of quantitative regression and T-test analyses. Hence, the findings of one method could confirm the findings of another method, subsequently strengthening the trustworthiness of causal claims. Thus, the identification of similar dynamics through the netnographic method could not only confirm the trustworthiness, and therefore the

internal validity, of causal claims; it could also enrich the claims with a more in-depth interpretation.

Moreover, five semi-structured expert interviews on the institutional views towards Amsterdam drill as part of my internship are conducted, and one interview with an artist making drill instrumentals (or ‘beats’) for Amsterdam drillers. These interviews were rather a *guiding* method instead of a *leading* method in answering my research question, but the insights derived from these interviews nonetheless contribute to methodological triangulation. This way, the trustworthiness of the causal relationships can be guaranteed by combining these three methods.

4.4. ADDITIONAL METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In this subchapter, I will discuss three additional methodological points that are independent of my position as a researcher, the reliability and the validity but that are yet relevant to discuss. First, I will reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my research process. My fieldwork started roughly one year after the outbreak of the coronavirus in the Netherlands and has continued to alter many aspects of our social lives. At the time of my fieldwork, our lives have become increasingly digitalised due to social distancing. Besides the fact that the predominantly digital research design is well suited for the current research theme, it additionally offers a secure way of conducting fieldwork in an insecure time. Although the pandemic has problematised fieldwork for many studies across different disciplines, the present fieldwork has not been drastically affected by these social changes. I would even argue that — despite acknowledging the seriousness of harms produced by the pandemic — it stimulated the quality of data in my fieldwork. Social interactions amongst youth were limited as schools, sporting clubs and other social facilities were (partially) closed, group limits in public and private spaces were enforced and events were cancelled. Dutch youth had more time to be online and were more dependent on digital technologies to interact with each other (Keijsers & Bülow, 2020, pp. 123-128). Subsequently, Dutch drill has increasingly moved towards the digital domain, which made social media an even more significant element within Dutch drill (van Vugt, 2020, p. 28).

Second, I will reflect on the cultural criminological relevance of the present methodology. The cultural criminological enterprise is intrinsically focused on qualitative research methods. Cultural criminologists are vocal in advocating the use of qualitative methods to study cultural criminological phenomena. Nonetheless, the present thesis attempts to contribute to Hayward’s

(2016) contention that cultural criminology should be invested in “breaking down existing barriers *between* quantitative and qualitative methodology” (p. 309). By triangulating between quantitative and qualitative analyses, the present thesis incorporates a mixed-methods approach to study drill through a cultural criminological framework. Furthermore, as cultural criminology is perceived as ‘a criminology of now’ (Ferrell et al., 2015), it adjusts the ethnographic enterprise that is imputable to cultural criminology to suit contemporary digital societies. Netnographic research is well suited to be applied in a cultural criminological framework as it is “highly adaptable to the numerous social connections people share” (Lane, 2016, p. 4) in contemporary digital societies. This contention holds especially true in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, where social interactions are becoming increasingly digitalised.

Third, I want to address a change of focus during the research process. Initially, the identification of all Amsterdam drill rappers and the dispersion of symbols throughout various city districts and drill groups were integral parts of the research design. However, both my empirical data and data from other literature or works could not interpret the identified symbolic differences. In other words, the differences were empirically identified but it was impossible to fathom the reasons underlying these differences. Hence, my data lacked theoretical interpretation on the variations in symbolic preferences throughout different localities and drill groups. This made me decide to erase this part within the research design, but because the data are still relevant for parties who want to understand the social dynamics and the various drill groups in Amsterdam I added it to the appendices. Therefore, the construction of the ‘Amsterdam Drill Map’ at the end of this work offers an overview of the various drill groups and their symbolic preferences within city districts, without being an integral part of the present research design.

4.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the present thesis involves the study of humans and human behaviour, ethical research must be guaranteed and should not be undervalued. Criminologists, just like other social scientists, carry the responsibility to protect the social and psychological wellbeing of the respondents whilst simultaneously fostering their rights, interests and sensibilities (Vander Laenen & O’Gorman, 2009, pp. 556-558). Moreover, the studied online street- and youth cultural communities are predominantly, as the latter term obviously insists, youth. Special protections to safeguard vulnerable groups such as young people must be taken, also because chapters 2 and 3 stressed the potential harms inflicted by the permanent character of digital artefacts.

Because online fieldwork is a recently developed and novel method, “there is little written about its methods and ethics” (Urbanik et al., 2020, p. 33). Nevertheless, online data collection is prone to controversy in academic debates, making it important to discuss the ethics surrounding it and how to explicitly deal with its implications. Simultaneously, it is aimed to contribute to this newly developing methodological realm by offering insights into these ethical dilemmas based on my fieldwork. Therefore, the next paragraphs will discuss how it is aimed to methodologically conduct research according to *good practice*.

As mentioned earlier, I continuously reflected on my social position in the empirical field by keeping a ‘methodological logbook’, allowing for the reassessment of my choices and transparency of the process. Here, the power relations generated by the passive stance between me and the research subjects were frequently and carefully taken into consideration. Whilst there are methodological benefits of eliminating socially desired behaviour and avoiding methodological distortion because the subjects are unaware that they participate in a study, my unobtrusive role in the empirical field could compromise the ethical standards of ‘informed consent’. Despite my choice to maintain the asymmetrical social relationship with my research subjects due to the rich methodological benefits, it is aimed to avoid harm to the individuals involved in the study. In doing so, I purposely avoid the disclosure of identities or any information that could be directly or indirectly traced back to the identities of the involved individuals.

Concretely, and in line with the ‘right to be forgotten’ implemented by the GDPR in the European Union (Wolford, n.d.), it is aimed to make any digital content used in the publication of this thesis ‘un-Google-able’ (Shklovski & Vertsei, 2012). That is to say that any picture, personal information, username, text or emoji directly or indirectly leading to the concerned profile or person is censored. It is verified if, after editing the picture, the information is untraceable in search engines. However, whilst reflecting on the ethical dilemmas presented to me throughout the content analysis, I considered the expressions of drillers in the music videos as a part of their publicly portrayed role as an artist. Therefore, some information presented in the upcoming chapters can be traced back to the artists, such as their artist names, quotes from lyrics, thick descriptions or visual screenshots. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases, the actual identities of the individuals manufacturing the artistic personas of drillers are essentially anonymous under the mantra ‘no face no case’ or, as the upcoming chapters will divulge, as part of a subcultural fashion trend. These reasons made me decide to not anonymise data referring to artistic personas.

Furthermore, scholars raise ethical questions on disseminating potentially deleted digital artefacts, the incorporation of publicly available information and the inclusion of initially ‘private’ digital information in the data (Lane, 2016; Urbanik et al., 2020). As Urbanik et al (2020) argue, “researchers must consider how they might remain ethical even if they are viewing public material or when consent is not needed or cannot be obtained” (p. 35). In the present study, I have (successfully) followed artists on Instagram who had initially locked off their profile from individuals who do not ‘follow’ them. Whilst withdrawing data from their profiles, I attempted to simultaneously maintain my unobtrusive role in the empirical field and provide transparency of my intentions to follow them. Therefore, the description of my Instagram account explicitly states that the account is used to conduct academic research and that they can ‘private message’ me for more information. Because they have accepted the request, my research subjects are explicitly allowing me to perceive their content. However, users who comment on posts of this online account have not received a follow request. Nevertheless, making their digital expressions ‘un-Google-able’ will, again, safeguard my research subjects from any harm inflicted by my study.

Besides the tension field between remaining unobtrusive to my research participants and avoiding any infliction of harm due to my study, it is moreover essential to be careful and thoughtful on the process of data storage (see Steenhout, 2009 pp. 422-425). Although I acknowledge the potential issues towards security and confidentiality of storing data on a cloud service, loss of data due to errors on physical storage disks would be destructive and devastating for my research. Hence, I attempted to digitally archive the data as secure as possible by incorporating two-factor authentication on my personal account and the inclusion of password protection over the files. Furthermore, I have not shared my raw data with third parties over the course of my research. Moreover, I transferred the data to a USB disk which I kept in a secure location as backup storage.

Lastly, I will reflect on my safety during online fieldwork. I attempted to avoid issues towards my safety as much as possible; the unobtrusive nature of my role as a researcher supported me in guaranteeing this safety. The earlier described asymmetrical relationship caused the research subjects to be unaware of my identity. In addition, every account that I used for the present research did not entail a personal picture of myself. Although I have utilised the name ‘J. de Jong’ in my Instagram profile, this was in no way retraceable to my identity (as there are many Dutch individuals with the same initial and surname). Moreover, the only interview that I had with a research subject that was involved in the Dutch and Amsterdam drill scene did not

produce any safety issues. The reciprocal exchange of confidential and personal information during this interview was avoided. Thus, I have had, at least until the publication of the thesis, no reason to believe that my personal safety was in danger.

CHAPTER 5 | THE VISUAL SYMBOLS OF AMSTERDAM DRILL



A plain black screen fades into a scene recorded in the public street at night. A man in the centre of the scene, wearing a fur coat and a chain with no less than nine pendants, is repetitively shouting ‘Amsterdam de Pijp! Amsterdam de Pijp!’. As clear as he stresses that he represents this neighbourhood adjacent to the city centre, it is the unclarity of the identities of the individuals next to him that the scene subsequently focuses on. Four men that seem younger than the man with the fur coat are entirely dressed in black and pose for the camera. They do so in an intimidating fashion by visibly looking angry through their eyes, even though the rest of their face is being covered by balaclavas, black jacket hoodies of popular sportswear brands and black facemasks. By repetitively miming to pull the trigger of a pistol, they invigorate their intimidating performance. The scene moves to the right, in which a police car is parked and an officer is stepping out of the car. Those familiar in Amsterdam will probably recognise the street called Ferdinand Bolstraat positioned in de Pijp. What the police officer does next is unclear, as approximately ten young men, wearing comparable fashion attributes as the other young men, are making efforts to be included in the visual frame of the recording. Similar to their peers, they mime gunshots and portray hand signs with the use of one or both hands. The scene turns black again. An ominous instrumental starts playing whilst slow-motion recordings of a subway station named ‘de Pijp’ are depicted. Subsequently, the screen turns to youth being arrested by policemen. The volume increases and the rhythm of the music starts accelerating. The visuals simultaneously move to a scene that is purposely shaking, creating a disorienting effect. A man with a three-hole balaclava who smokes a joint through one of the holes is centred in the shot. An abundance of peers with face coverings that handily mime gunshots, flash hand signs and put up their middle fingers are forming the decor of the scene. Thereafter, the videographer takes his credits by sliding in a scene with the text ‘*Visuals by Ivo*’. The smoking man in the three-hole balaclava starts rapping.

The video represented above belongs to the introduction of the music video ‘de Pijp’ by drill group *73 de Pijp*. It is the most viewed video of Amsterdam drill and even of Dutch drill (7even 3, 2019)¹². Uploaded in January 2019, in the awakening of drill’s entrance to the Netherlands, many visual symbols described above perpetuate in other contemporary Amsterdam drill music

¹² This holds true for the time of writing, which is 25 July 2021, with approximately 4.6 million views.

videos. For instance, the visual references to the neighbourhood, the depiction of the police, the wearing of face masks, the setting, the efforts of the videographer and the abundance of hand gestures are ubiquitous in Amsterdam drill music videos. What will follow in this chapter is an outlining of these, and other, visual symbols of Amsterdam drill music videos. As explained in the previous chapter, the symbols that are manifested in the content list serve as the blueprint of Amsterdam drill symbols. The results from the content analysis will — partly — answer the following subquestion: “*what audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?*”. The symbols that are described will accordingly be provided with in-depth interpretation through the use of *thick descriptions*, quotes and exemplary illustrations. The thick descriptions are accompanied with QR codes that can be scanned with digital devices, or can be clicked on when this document is read digitally. The QR codes will take the reader to the exact time of the fragment that is discussed in the thick description, so the reader can sense this fragment him or herself. Profound insights on the meanings ascribed to the symbols are extracted from the use of a logbook during content analysis. Methodological triangulation with insights derived from netnographic fieldwork additionally aid the process of illuminating the symbolic meanings. Moreover, one interview with an instrumental producer¹³ offered more insights into the aesthetical meanings and the overall process of composing a music video. By combining these perspectives, the results of this study will also answer the following subquestion: “*what do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?*”.

It is aimed to position the symbols and their meanings in a framework that acknowledges the cultural and digital criminological relevance of the drill phenomenon. Simultaneously, drill is perceived as a part of the wider street culture, which is defined as “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in the opposition to [feelings of] exclusion from mainstream society” (Bourgois, 2003, p. 8). In the first three subchapters, the concept of ‘inscriptions’ as described in chapter 3 is forming the theoretical fundament of interpreting the use and meanings of symbols¹⁴. In doing so, a significant distinction is made between embodied inscriptions, meaning the communication of symbolic meanings through bodily appearances, and material inscriptions, referring to material objects that communicate symbolic understandings. First, namely, the embodied inscriptions related to drillers’ fashion and their meanings are discussed. Second, the embodied inscriptions

¹³ The exact definition of an ‘instrumental producer’ is provided later on in this chapter.

¹⁴ To repeat, inscriptions are the symbolic understanding and communication of both concrete visual acts and material objects (Streeck & Kallmeyer, 2001, p. 465; van Vugt, 2020, pp. 12-13).

concerning the movement of bodies are explained. Third, the objects that serve as material inscriptions are identified and explicated. Fourth, and lastly, the efforts of the support personnel on visual symbols, in this thesis identified as videographers, are described.

5.1. THE EMBODIED INSCRIPTIONS: FASHION

Amsterdam drillers use their bodies in various ways to express themselves. This subchapter discusses the aesthetical looks of the fashion attributes that Amsterdam drillers are wearing, and their underlying symbolic meanings. First, the specific use of face masks, their meanings and their functions will be discussed. Thereafter, the analysis will focus on their full outfits and their respective functions by comparing them with the meanings of fashion attributes in traditional gangster culture.

Some Amsterdam drillers apply various techniques to conceal their faces. These techniques are depicted in figure 7, alongside the percentages of how many Amsterdam drill music videos entail a scene in which this technique is portrayed at least once. From left to right, these techniques entail animated blurring; dark light; positioning the hand in front of the face; wearing a three-hole balaclava; two-hole balaclava; total covering balaclava; bandana; caricature mask; flag; gas mask; ice hockey mask; jacket hoodie; motor cross helmet; motor helmet; mouth mask; sun- or ski glasses; and a (football) t-shirt. Amongst all of the 173 analysed Amsterdam drill music videos, there is at least one scene in which an individual utilises one of the various techniques to entirely or partly hide his face. However, not all Amsterdam drillers apply these techniques to conceal their identity. Some drillers choose to perform ‘*baitface*’, meaning that they show their face due to the absence of a face mask.



Figure 7.- Overview and percentages of identified face-covering techniques

Anthropologist Donald Pollock (1995), in his renowned work ‘*Masks and the Semiotics of Identity*’, argues that the functions and meanings ascribed to the use of masks are culturally grounded. Hence, the function of wearing a face mask in Amsterdam drill seems to be derived from — as discussed in chapter 2 — the ‘no face, no case’ code that originates from UK drill.

The code is used to evade the identification of authorities by concealing the wearer's identity. Besides the function to communicate cultural codes of communities, a mask could also symbolise a certain identity amongst the wearer of the mask. According to Foreman (2000), our psychology functions in a way that we focus on the faces of individuals. Consequently, the concealment of the face through the use of a mask distinguishes the wearer's actions from his or her identity. This usually evokes a sense of fear to those who perceive and assess the wearer of the mask. This contention is appropriated by drillers as it does not solely function as a way to evade authorities, but also to invigorate the construction of 'violent imaginaries' as conceptualised by Schröder and Schmidt (2001)¹⁵. Drawing upon a dramaturgical framework, the face coverings may therefore be seen as inscriptions used to enhance the violent impression management of their presentation of self.

However, the function of hiding one's identity is not always effective or perhaps even intended. To wit, individuals sometimes hide their faces in one scene, whilst being *baitface* in another scene of the same music video. This contests the function of hiding one's face in order to not be recognised by authorities. Online drill consumers also recognise the failing function of identity concealment and suggest that it has become more of a fashion style instead of a functional technique. Consequently, it could discourage online drill consumers to perceive it as 'authentically' *street*, losing its symbolic credibility of street capital or the legitimate construction of a violent imaginary. As Pollock (1995, p. 584) argued, masks solely function accurately if everyone involved in a (sub)culture agrees on the symbolic meaning it communicates. However, as the symbolic meaning of masks in the drill subculture seem to be ambiguous towards the 'no face, no case' policy, its functionality is similarly becoming contested. The use of facemasks as a subcultural style hinting at criminality has been commodified to serve as a fashionable symbol that invigorates one's criminal reputation, but is not always functional in hiding one's identity. This feeds into the cultural criminological contentions concerning a consumer culture that pursues stylised excitement in the form of representations of crime. The symbolic meaning of face masks are interwoven with criminality and have now been packaged as cultural symbols that are, as Ilan (2015) would call them, 'street cool'. This means that the portrayal of nonchalance towards violating the norms of mainstream society has become commodified. Thus, on the one hand, the use of face masks can be used as a functional technique to hide one's identity. On the other hand, face masks might also serve as

¹⁵ To repeat, the 'violent imaginary' of an individual is constructed by the symbolic interaction centred around the legitimate use of violence through narratives, performances and inscriptions.

a commodified fashion style that represents crime without necessarily concealing the wearer's identity. Consequently, images of crime conflate with a consumer culture that strives to consume this as a fashion style. Ultimately, the commodification of face masks could be interpreted as a part of the broader late modern development that includes “the commodification of violence and the marketing of transgression” (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 164).¹⁶

The stylistic commodification of face coverings and the loss of its functionality become apparent in an interview with two members of Amsterdam drill group *73 de Pijp*. Amid the drill group's popular breakthrough, these two members decided to divulge their formerly hidden identity by taking off their masks in this online interview (BNNVARA Academy, 2020). As the artists claim, the most significant reason behind their identity reveal is because they wanted to musically broaden their genres by producing other music than solely drill. This simultaneously implies that the symbolic use of face coverings is inseparable from drill production, whilst they needed to desist in hiding their identity in order to musically move their production away from drill and ‘go mainstream’. The fact that, after this interview, they still occasionally use face-covering techniques in music videos¹⁶ suggests that face masks have become a stylistic fashion attribute that lost the original function of hiding one's identity. Face masks, as an embodied inscription and subcultural image of crime, has transformed into a commodified fashion product for them.

Besides face masks, drillers are wearing other fashion attributes that carry symbolic meanings. Because media outlets sometimes wrongly assume Dutch drillers to be gangs (van der Sanden, 2020), people might presume that Amsterdam drillers appropriate the same fashion attributes as traditional gangs. Here, gang fashion heavily focuses on the public portrayal of material success. Carl Nightingale (1993, p. 135) describes how individuals who feel excluded from society are heavily influenced by television, music and other mediated images of what conventional society perceives as normal. Hence, they attempt to overcompensate their feelings of exclusion by showing their expenses and luxury products to others. The bulimic conditions of late modern society, where structural exclusion is accompanied by cultural inclusion, therefore infiltrate fashion styles of gang culture (Young, 1999). This consuming obsession is conceptualised by Veblen (1953) as ‘conspicuous consumption’, where consumption is not based on physical necessities but rather on a public performance that symbolises a certain status in the field. By conspicuously showing and consuming expensive clothes, jewellery and other

¹⁶ As, for instance, can be seen in music video [‘Intro’ by Choppa and RB](#).

fashion attributes in mediated images of ghetto culture, gang members strive to compensate for their socio-economic exclusion from mainstream society. As chapter 3 described, gang culture, and therefore gangsta rap, has become commodified. Consequently, gangsta rappers also started to visualise expensive designer brands, jewellery and other expensive fashion attributes in their music videos (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 163). Charis Kubrin (2005) therefore perceives the infiltration of conspicuous consumption in gangsta rap as a means of constructing an image of self that attains ‘respect’.

However, it seems that Amsterdam drillers are not heavily invested in conspicuously showing expensive fashion attributes to attain respect. If one watches an Amsterdam drill music video, he or she would probably see youth in Nike, Adidas or North Face training suits, T-shirts branding a football club, sneakers and plain black jackets. Besides an occasional depiction of, for instance, a designer brand bag or a gold chain, Amsterdam drillers seem to refrain from accentuating material wealth through the conspicuous portrayal of overly expensive fashion items. Fashion attributes in Amsterdam drill rather seem to hint at street life and criminality. In the Dutch drill subculture, embracing economic disadvantages is — as chapter 7 will also elucidate — perceived as authentic and status-enhancing. As music videos should depict “what the street looks like” (Stuart, 2020, p. 67), drillers must also visualise that they are ‘street’ by wearing training suits and streetwear.



Moreover, wearing a full black outfit oftentimes hints at involvement in robberies. This becomes especially manifested in the music video ‘*Robbery*’ by B3, Nytje and M34. The central theme of the music video is centred around their involvement in violent robberies. The music video starts by playing the introducing instrumental whilst visualising two young men walking out of a flat hallway, with one individual holding a sports bag. It is dark outside. They are looking focused and attentive; it seems that they are up to no good. Then the scene moves to the entrance door of another flat hallway, where a man whose face is blurred through visual intervention greets two other men with fist bumps. Their faces are similarly concealed by wearing black jacket hoodies over their head and black face masks in front of their mouths and noses. They are using hand gestures to discuss a plan, pointing at places in the distance. Again, it seems that they are up to no good. The scene moves black again, with the instrumental rising in tempo and the voice of an artist is hearable as he rhythmically raps ‘yeah’ four times. Thereafter, the bass kicks in and the song gains an energetic impulse as

the instrumental starts playing various hi-hats, snares, 808 drums and vocal samples. Simultaneously, an artist starts rapping with the introducing words *‘it’s a robbery!’*. The scene moves to nine men standing under a viaduct in the dark, all dressed entirely in black. They are miming gunshots, swaying their hands rhythmically and are dancing along with the song. The entire song continues to describe them perpetrating and mastering the act of robbing. Their black outfits are symbolic of this mastery, as it functions to conceal their identities — especially in the dark. Driller Nytje makes sure to stress this as well, by rapping:

*“We are on the streets, we are really racing [street language for ‘stealing’].
I am on that outfit; jacket, shoes, pants that are black”*

Whereas conspicuous consumption through expensive fashion attributes in gangsta rap functions as a means to overcompensate structural exclusion (Nightingale, 1993, p. 135; Kubrin, 2005), Amsterdam drillers appear to embrace their structural exclusion. The majority of Amsterdam drillers do not attempt to compensate for their social exclusion by conspicuously showing expensive fashion attributes. Rather, Amsterdam drillers represent resistance towards the norms of conventional society by symbolising their lifestyles of violent criminality through fashion attributes. Here, they attempt to accentuate their unconventional lifestyles by wearing face masks that are symbolic of a criminal and dangerous lifestyle, sports- and streetwear that are representing their lives on the streets and entirely black outfits hinting at evading authorities during robberies. Thus, fashion attributes that serve as embodied inscriptions are not attempts to portray a public performance that symbolises their economic capital and hence, compensate for their exclusion. Rather, outfits such as depicted in figures 8 and 9 symbolise that they resist conventional norms and embrace their structural exclusion through a street performance and construction of a criminal persona. This does not mean, however, that they alienate themselves further from conventional society. As will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7, Amsterdam drillers



Figure 8.- Group of young men with streetwear, training suits and black outfits



Figure 9.- Entirely black outfit

are actually dependent on the label that conventional society puts on them. Rather than lacking culture or being alienated from mainstream culture, the resistant attitudes of Amsterdam drillers are heavily inspired by the commodified desires of conventional society.

Although drill is perceived as an offshoot of gangsta rap, the symbols are not directly copied from traditional gangster culture. The mediated images of fashion in gangsta rap have been changed to suit the definition of a driller. Chapter 3 described that the deterritorialisation of hip hop genres could be seen as a spiral, in which the locality of urban music scenes causes the mediated images and symbolic meanings of rap to be continuously redefined. In relation to gangsta rap, Amsterdam drillers are wearing different fashion attributes that constitute different meanings. Even within the drill subculture, symbolic meanings are continuously reconstituted and redefined. For instance, the commodification of face masks, in which they lose their original identity-concealing function, transforms their symbolic meanings into a consumer-oriented fashion style. Furthermore, the type of clothes, the black colour of their outfits and the lack of expensive fashion accessories alter the symbolic meanings of fashion in gangsta rap towards representations that embrace structural exclusion in drill rap. It seems that the change of mediated images and symbols of Amsterdam drill is part of a wider spiralling process in which loops never seem to be the same as they initially were. In respect of gangsta rap, the altering fashion styles and their underlying meanings in Amsterdam drill are exemplary of this phenomenon within urban music genres. These loops constitute a hall of mirrors, continuously spiralling away from prior meanings through the representations of them in a late modern mediascape (see Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 151-158).

5.2. THE EMBODIED INSCRIPTIONS: BODY MOVEMENTS

Amsterdam Drillers use an ubiquity of hand and body movements as embodied inscriptions to symbolise certain meanings. Therefore, this subchapter will first discuss the use of hand gestures and movements that symbolise affiliations with groups and localities. Then, it distinguishes three symbolic functions amongst the use of hand gestures that are communicating subcultural norms and values. Subsequently, this subchapter explores the movements of the entire body and their symbolic meanings.

Certain hand signs are visualised by actors in Amsterdam drill music videos to symbolise their membership to a drill group or their representation of a neighbourhood. Inspired by gang culture, Jody Miller (1995) notes that “gangs use hand signals as a way of claiming their gang

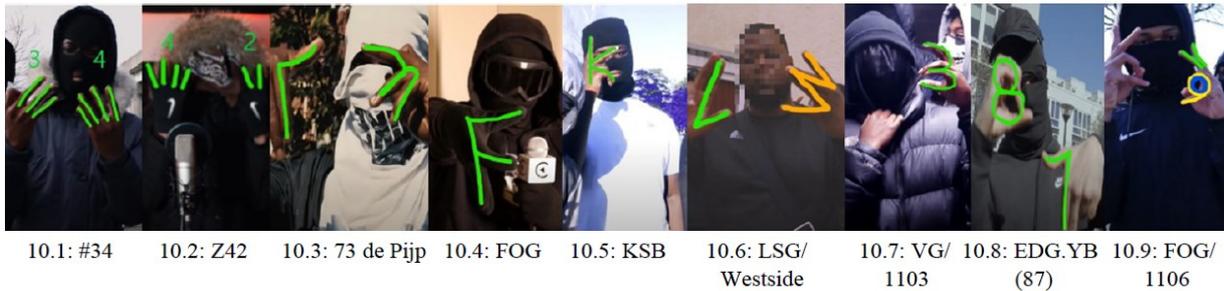


Figure 10.- Exemplary visual sample of identified hand signs

affiliation or communicating other messages” (p. 233). Through the process of deterritorialisation, these hand signs have been adapted to the locality and groups of Amsterdam drillers. Drillers are creatively constructing their own signs with different symbolic meanings and visualise these signs repetitively throughout music videos. As illustrated in figures 10.1 to 10.5, affiliations with drill groups are visualised by either handily depicting numbers incorporated in their respective drill group’s name or by symbolising key letters of the group names. Figures 10.6 to 10.9 also symbolise group membership, but these figures refer to the locality of their drill groups. The depicted hand signs may therefore be seen as inscriptions where embodied acts visualise symbolic meanings. Chapter 3 discussed the concept of ‘super place attachment’ (Kintrea et al., 2008), which refers to the strong affiliation and identification of localities to the identity of youth. These hand signs may be seen as a visual manifestation of super place attachment as they symbolise strong affiliations with places. Therefore, they are an important element within the identity of drillers and drill groups. Amsterdam drillers are not hesitant in portraying gang-inspired hand signs, with an average mean of 5.8 *shots*¹⁷ per minute that depicts at least one hand sign. This once again evidences the significance of embodied inscriptions concerning locality and group affiliations to individual and group identities in Amsterdam drill.

Besides glorifying their own group and represented localities, hand signs are also used as symbols for antagonistic expressions towards others. In other words, instead of amicably referring to one’s own group, hand signs can also be used to antipathetically challenge rivalling groups. By signifying a handily mimed or real pistol next to the hand sign of a rivalling group, drillers visually express that they are ‘killers’ of this rivalling group. In doing so, they put ‘a *K on*’ this drill group, which is linguistically symbolised by adding ‘k after the name of the targeted group. In figures 11.1 to 11.4, rivalling drill groups are targeted by portraying a gun

¹⁷ To repeat, a ‘shot’ is a singular visual fragment with a clear beginning and end before it moves to another visual fragment.

next to their respective hand sign. In a similar fashion as described above, handily references to localities are also used to indirectly target drill groups. Figures 11.5 to 11.8 depict drillers *putting a K* on the postcodes of rivalling postcode areas. This could be derived from the UK drill scene, where postcodes serve a central symbolic theme. Thus, embodied inscriptions are used as instruments in maintaining, reinforcing or creating rivalries — or ‘*beefs*’ — between drill groups.

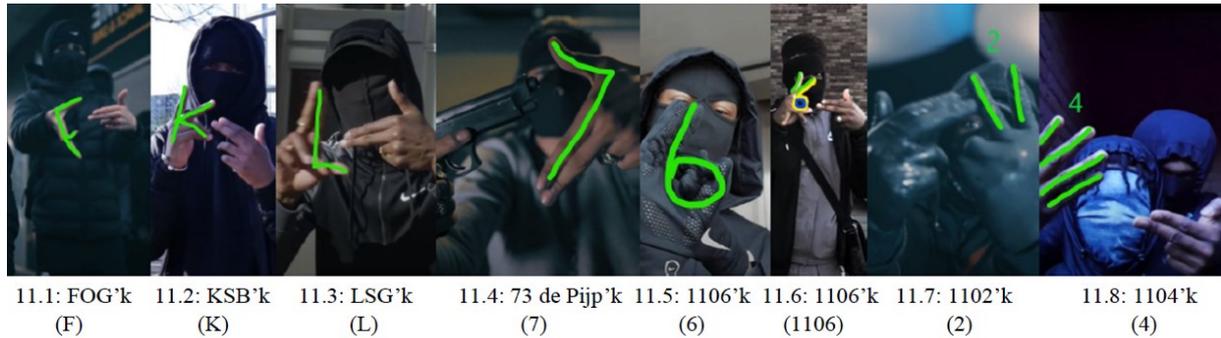


Figure 11.- Exemplary visual sample of identified antagonistic hand signs

However, hand gestures do not solely refer to the direct antagonisation or representation of explicit drill groups and territories. Handily inscriptions are ubiquitous in Amsterdam drill production and serve to fulfil various functions within the impression management of Amsterdam drillers. The following paragraphs will outline three strands of functions related to hand gestures and their symbolic meanings in the drill subculture. To indicate the ubiquity of these hand gestures, every following hand gesture is accompanied by the average mean of visual ‘shots’ per minute (referred to as ‘s/m’) in which the symbol is depicted amongst Amsterdam drill music videos.

First, drillers use their hands to symbolise the physical harm that awaits someone or that has already been done through the use of weapons. Amsterdam drillers do so by moving their hands from left to right on their throat to symbolise the cutting of one’s throat (0.3 s/m); miming to shoot a rifle (1.1 s/m); miming to shoot a pistol with one hand (3.8 s/m) or two hands (0.3 s/m); and moving one’s hand up and down to symbolise the act of stabbing someone (2 s/m). Second, unaddressed challenges and insults through the use of hands can also be visually symbolised by putting up a middle finger (1.4 s/m); moving the thumb and the residual of the fingers on one hand repetitively towards each other to symbolise that one is ‘on chat’ — meaning they lie and talk too much (0.5 s/m); placing an index finger in front of the mouth to symbolise that a rival should be silent (0.2 s/m); and using two fingers to mime the legs of a person running away to symbolise that a rival *dashes* — meaning to run away from a conflict (0.1 s/m).

Both types of hand gestures support the construction of a ‘violent imaginary’, as conceptualised by Schröder and Schmidt (2001), amongst Amsterdam drillers. They serve as embodied inscriptions that contribute to a violent performance, whilst they are simultaneously symbolic of the violent character of Amsterdam drill. As Lerner and Kubrin (2021) note, “[g]raphic depictions of over-the-top violent acts as well as threats of violence are pervasive in gangsta rap both to create a violent persona and to project a reputation” (p. 22). For Amsterdam drillers, this is not so much different. However, perceiving this violent reputation as the literal truth is, as Ilan (2020) would note, ‘street illiterate’. Many scholars similarly argue that the identity of rappers should be seen as distinct from the “manufactured fictional character the artist has created” (Lerner & Kubrin, 2021, p. 15). Moreover, “the themes related to violence are not just common in rap music but can be found in popular culture more generally” (Lerner & Kubrin, 2021, p. 23). In late modern times, crime and violence are packaged as commodified symbols that are found throughout various forms of entertainment. The fact that these hand movements symbolise violence in an artistic enterprise such as drill should, therefore, be positioned in a late modern consumer culture that extends beyond drill and rap. Drill rap is another phenomenon that commodifies crime and violence in order to stimulate late modern consumer economies. The self-representation is therefore not necessarily a presentation of one’s actual self; it could be the presentation of a constructed and commodified violent persona. As these representations are situated in a hall of mirrors, where their images are becoming increasingly mediated, the distinction between the actuality and fictionality of these personas become blurred. Hence, as Ilan (2020) notes, we should not perceive these hand gestures as the literal truth. They are part of constructing a ‘violent imaginary’ amongst their artistic persona.

Third, Amsterdam drillers also use hand gestures to symbolise elements on the weaker side of the ‘street cultural spectrum’ as posited by Ilan (2015) — albeit to a lesser extent. Whereas the above-mentioned hand gestures are centred around violence, which pertains to elements on the stronger side of the spectrum, the weaker side of this spectrum contains symbols that are not focused on violence but on more expressive and performative elements of street culture. Amsterdam drillers do so by miming sexual acts (0.1 s/m); miming to smoke or roll a joint (0.1 s/m); putting the hand in a ‘C’ shape and therefore mime to hold a stack of money bills (0.5 s/m); and crossing the palms of both hands to mime being cuffed as a tribute to one or more incarcerated peers (0.5 s/m).

The function of these embodied inscriptions is to invigorate a hypermasculine persona. According to Lerner and Kubrin (2021), topics in rap that symbolise hypermasculinity “include

sexually objectifying women, bragging about using or selling drugs, displaying tattoos and grills, bragging about financial wealth, owning and using guns, and flaunting expensive clothing and jewelry. Rappers gain prominence and respect through hypermasculinity” (p. 24). The hand gestures that symbolise sexual activities, consumption of drugs, financial wealth and friendly relationships with criminals are, therefore, symbolic of drillers’ public hypermasculine performance. If a driller, supported by these hand gestures, performs a presentation of self that is hypermasculine, he will gain more respect.

Amsterdam drillers do not solely use their hands as embodied inscriptions; they also use their full bodies in the form of dance moves. Chapter 3 posed that rap, and therefore drill, is embedded in a wider hip hop culture. The interwovenness of dance and music in hip hop connects drill with a certain dance style. All identified dance moves are depicted in appendix 4, and it is vital to take account of the violent symbols within some dance moves. For instance, dance moves called ‘gun lean’, ‘wet man down’ and ‘pirate swing’ all serve as embodied inscriptions symbolising the act of bearing a firearm, stabbing someone and swinging in the air with a knife, respectively. Drawing upon chapter 3, these dances can be perceived as a sort of ‘memetic deviance’. Here, a deviant act is virally replicated through networked publics to fulfil a joyful desire of participating in a movement and belonging to a community. The dances depicted in Amsterdam drill music videos, which could symbolise deviancy, also quickly replicate throughout networked publics. Portraying a dance move might offer Amsterdam drillers a sense of belonging to the wider drill subculture. Thus, dance moves can be used to symbolise affiliation with the drill subculture and offer a sense of belonging. Moreover, they can function as embodied inscriptions that symbolise violence and, accordingly, contribute to the violent imaginaries and hypermasculine identity of artistic personas.

5.3. THE MATERIAL INSCRIPTIONS

As opposed to embodied inscriptions, material objects can also be used as an inscription. The present subchapter explores the concrete material objects that transfer symbolic meaning in Amsterdam drill rap. First, the portrayal of weapons as material objects are discussed. Second, the portrayal of relevant concrete items other than weapons is examined. Third, and lastly, the local settings where Amsterdam drill music videos are recorded will be perceived and explored as a material inscription.

Chapter 2 posed that weapon portrayal is a characteristic of drill rap music videos, whilst chapter 1 stressed that the supposed romanticisation of weapons leads to societal concerns surrounding the effect on Dutch drill consumers. In a similar fashion as other local and national drill scenes, Amsterdam drillers frequently portray weapons in music videos. At least one weapon is portrayed in 42% of the analysed music videos, with the portrayal of at least one knife being 31% and the portrayal of at least one firearm being 23%. This simultaneously implies that there is a variety of weapons that are portrayed. Figure 12, therefore, presents an exemplary visual sample of the types of weapons and the percentages of how many music videos depict the concerned type of weapon at least once. Figures 12.1 to 12.5 entail, from left to right, a pistol; automatic handgun; rifle; shotgun; and ammunition, all relating to the portrayal of firearms. Whereas a pistol is portrayed in approximately one in five music videos, the other types of firearms are seldomly portrayed. Figure 12.6 pertains to the portrayal of knives, which is portrayed in almost one out of three Amsterdam drill music videos. Here, it is evidenced that the depiction of knives is indeed a key symbol in Amsterdam drill, supporting the claim of chapter 2 that UK drill predominantly influenced Dutch — and therefore Amsterdam — drill. Figure 12.7 illustrates a deviant case of solely one music video in which a crossbow is portrayed. Thus, whilst Amsterdam drillers depict a variety of weapons¹⁸, pistols and knives are shown the most.



Figure 12.- Exemplary visual sample of types of weapons

In the context of American gangsta rap, “violence is a classic way of proving masculinity in Western culture, and using guns to show masculinity is a widespread tradition throughout American culture. For this reason, lyrics about guns and hypermasculinity are not a sign of a deviant criminal subculture but part and parcel of mainstream American culture” (Lerner & Kubrin, 2021, p. 25). Considering the process of deterritorialisation indicated in chapter 2, restrictive firearm policies in the UK cause drillers to depict knives instead of firearms to show

¹⁸ Melee weapons, in this thesis identified as crowbars and baseball bats, are not included under the material inscriptions of ‘weapons’. The symbolic meanings of these material inscriptions are more ambiguous than the other weapons because they can also refer to burglary and sports.

hypermasculinity. As Lerner and Kubrin (2021, p. 25) therefore noted, the types of weapons that are portrayed in drill music videos are dependent on the local context. However, the function to construct a hypermasculine persona remains the same. In other words, the ‘signified’ material has changed but the ‘signifier’, meaning the symbolic meaning of the material, is unvaried. In their efforts to construct a hypermasculine persona, a weapon could symbolise a tough persona that would gain respect (Anderson, 1999). However, this does not mean that the individual who holds a weapon intends to use this weapon, or even possesses one. The symbolic function of portraying a weapon is to construct a violent, tough and hypermasculine persona; perceiving this persona as part of one’s personal, non-artistic, identity would be what Ilan (2020) calls ‘street illiterate’. An NPR podcast, talking about a boy in Wilmington who was charged with gun possession and gang participation after depicting a gun in a rap video, illustrates this:

“Maybe you’re posing with a gun, so people won’t mess with you, which a lot of younger people told us is a very real thing in Wilmington. But that doesn’t mean you have a gun. And it definitely doesn’t mean you’re about to shoot someone with it.” (Rosin, 2019, as cited in Lerner & Kubrin, 2021)

Because of similar symbolic meanings, the same contention holds true for the portrayal of knives prevalent in UK drill. Amsterdam drill is heavily influenced by UK drill, and this is observable in the percentage of music videos in which a knife is portrayed. This does not mean, however, that firearms or other types of weapons are never portrayed in Amsterdam drill music videos. Figure 12 illustrated that Amsterdam drillers show various types of weapons. Moreover, the depiction of weapons throughout Amsterdam is also a localised phenomenon. Chapter 2 discussed the different analytical levels of deterritorialisation in drill rap. As regards the neighbourhood micro level, Amsterdam drillers from different city districts vary in their average frequencies of portraying a weapon. Based on T-test analyses illustrated in additional tables 2 and 3, drillers representing neighbourhoods in Amsterdam New-West significantly depict more weapons than the aggregation of music videos from drillers in other city districts. Drillers representing neighbourhoods in Amsterdam South-East, however, show significantly fewer weapons than the average amount of music videos in other city districts. Based on the current data, explanations for these deterritorialised differences on a neighbourhood meso level could not be given. Future research could explore the effect that these specific localities might have on the portrayal of weapons in Amsterdam drill music videos.



The authentically violent and hypermasculine image that a weapon could symbolise also gets commodified in Amsterdam drill. The collaboration song between Amsterdam drill group *73 de Pijp* and popular mainstream DJ duo ‘*The Blockparty*’ resembles this commodification of weaponry. The respective video clip starts with slow-motion *shots* capturing members of the Amsterdam drill group miming gunshots and flashing hand signs. They are standing in their represented neighbourhood, de Pijp, with face-covering masks and black outfits. If one watches without sound, these are common visual elements of drill music videos that are, therefore, nothing new. However, the instrumental is different; no ominous church bells, no sliding 808 drum riffs and generally a mainstream ‘clubbing’ atmosphere. When the artists start rapping, the clubbing atmosphere is accentuated as the video clip frequently shows scenes where they are in a room with scantily clad dancing girls in cages and dark clubbing lights. The common themes of the song are centred around sex and violence. Throughout the video clip, eleven *shots* depict a child-like toy gun as illustrated in figure 13, whilst knives are censored by blurring the object through visual edits. Both the audio and visual symbols of the music video are a mix of clubbing, sex and violence.

The interwovenness of clubbing, sex and violence in this music video could be interpreted as part of the late modern trend where violence gets commodified. The violent characteristics of drill conflate with universal themes of partying and sex that are, according to Ferrell et al. (2015, p. 163), generally included in popular mainstream music videos. In other words, mainstream artists appropriate the violent symbols in drill to match late modern consumption economies where people strive to consume forms of entertainment that include violence. By drawing upon the street cultural spectrum (Ilan, 2015), this process alludes to the phenomenon where symbols are transferred from the stronger side to the weaker side of the spectrum. Here, violent symbols are transformed into more expressive and performative symbols. Symbolising hypermasculinity by portraying a weapon in music videos becomes a marketable product taken over by hip hop artists — in this case, a DJ duo — on the lower side of the street cultural spectrum. In doing so, the exact nature of weapon portrayal is adjusted to the context of this ‘weaker’ realm. Here, child-like toy guns serve as mainstream, ‘street cool’, yet ostensibly innocent, symbols. In other words, the portrayal of weapons in drill music videos adapts to match its new ‘mainstream’ environment by transforming the depictions of them into child-like guns. These spiralling images are not the same as they initially were. Hence, the loops and spirals of weapon imagery

in drill move away to new perceptions and meanings through the commodification of weapon portrayal.



Figure 13.- Portrayal of child-esque weapon



Figure 14.- Wearing of merchandise

Besides the commodification of weapons in Amsterdam drill music videos, drillers commodify their artistic persona — which is similarly based on violence — as well. As discussed in chapter 2, drillers enter the online attention economy and accordingly commodify their artistic brand through digital content. In 26% of the analysed Amsterdam drill music videos, merchandise that brands an artistic persona, drill group or label is depicted. As figure 14 concretely illustrates, the simple wearing of a jacket with the respective artist name is a means for drillers to commodify their persona whilst pursuing micro-celebrity in the market of the online attention economy. Merchandise does not necessarily entail clothes, but could also be other material objects that are branded. According to Bauman (2007), neoliberalist governmentality and capitalism recast us as commodities and consumers of each other. Commodifying one's artistic brand to attract attention in a late modern consumer society can be seen as the archetype of this type of self-commodification. Ultimately, micro-celebrity could be interpreted as a form of self-commodification that matches a society entirely consisting of consumer commodities. In Amsterdam drill music videos, this late modern phenomenon is captured by the commodification of one's artistic brand through the visual portrayal of merchandise.

The late modern forces of commodification continue to affect different domains of Amsterdam drill. Besides the commodification of violence through weapons and the commodification of artistic personas through merchandise, crime is similarly commodified by drillers. By showing excessive amounts of — what seems to be — cannabis and powder drugs, and weighing scales on which these drugs are placed, drillers refer to possessing or dealing large amounts of drugs. Figure 15 illustrates such a scene, in which a driller is filmed in a marijuana farm that exceeds the Dutch legal amount of five marijuana plants grown by a single individual. Moreover,

Amsterdam drillers oftentimes refer to debit card fraud in their lyrics, ask their online followers for debit cards that they could use for these fraudulent financial activities and online drill consumers frequently discuss how to do they similarly swindle others by using debit cards. As six of the 173 analysed music videos contain the visual portrayal of multiple debit cards at once such as depicted in figure 16, Amsterdam drillers hint at involvement in debit card fraud. The debit cards are symbolic of their fraudulent activities as they oftentimes pair the portrayal of them with lyrics referring to these acts. Hence, it seems that debit card fraud has become a subcultural criminal style. Furthermore, ankle monitors as shown in figure 17 are encountered in music videos to function as a material inscription that symbolises past detention and therefore, constructs a criminal persona.



Figure 15.- Driller smoking a joint in a marijuana farm



Figure 16.- Driller showing debit cards



Figure 17.- Visual fragment of an ankle monitor on a driller

Surette (2015) describes how ‘performance crimes’, which are crimes committed to be witnessed by an audience, are enhanced by new media technologies. The material inscriptions symbolising criminal activities could be perceived as manifestations of this phenomenon. An underlying motivation for drillers to create a criminal identity in music videos could be that this performance is witnessed by a wide and homogeneous digital superpublic. The technological infrastructures of social media platforms enhance the ability for drillers to display a criminal performance in front of a wider audience. However, we should not take every material inscription hinting at criminal involvement literally, because we would then succumb to what Ilan (2020) describes as ‘street illiteracy’. Music videos of Amsterdam drillers could be used as a vehicle in constructing a criminal identity to enhance their ‘street capital’ (Sandberg, 2008). This means that they construct an identity based on “the actor’s mastery of criminal activity and violence within a street culture prescribing particular values with its own rewards, gains, profits and sanctions” (p. 157). Drillers vie to stress that they possess the most street capital as this gives them a considerable amount of respect. However, a criminal artistic persona does not necessarily make someone criminal; the portrayal of street capital could also be based on fictional images. To understand the potential motivations for disseminating a criminal identity,

Yar's (2012) concept of 'will-to-representation' focuses on people's "desire to be seen, and esteemed or celebrated, by others for their criminal activities" (p. 252). Performance crimes are at the end of the day performances, and taking the commodification of crime in late modernity into account, these performances could be motivated by a desire to be seen in a consumer-oriented online attention economy. Here, the ready availability for such self-creation on social media platforms conflates with late modern developments where crime and consumers get commodified. Ultimately, the distinction between actual and fictional criminal identities becomes blurred in a late modern digitalised mediascape. Drillers might be motivated to use commodified symbols hinting at criminality so it would be witnessed by a wider audience, but this does not necessarily make the individual that manufactures the drillers' persona criminal.

Material inscriptions may also serve to depict street cultural symbols that do not include criminality and violence. More expressive and performative elements of street culture are therefore shown as well. Drawing upon Ilan's (2015) street cultural spectrum, these elements are positioned on the 'lower side' of the spectrum. For instance, the earlier discussed fashion attributes such as sportswear and streetwear worn in music videos are manifestations of symbols on the lower side of the spectrum. Moreover, the depiction of money in 11% of the music videos symbolises financial wealth which, according to Lerner and Kubrin (2021, p. 24), contributes to the construction of a hypermasculine persona. Similarly, the use of drugs in music videos can support the construction of a hypermasculine identity. In 47% of the music videos, an individual holds or smokes a joint as illustrated in figure 15, whilst nitrogen balloons¹⁹ are shown in 5% of the music videos. These elements could be interpreted as part of a street cultural style. Hence, they are symbolic of drillers' performances where they attempt to be perceived as 'street cool' and hypermasculine by a wide digital audience.

Lastly, localities may also serve as material inscriptions. Because locality is important in the drill subculture, the 'settings' of Amsterdam drill music videos are meaningful components of the video clip. As noted in chapter 2, the visual elements in a music video should depict "what the street looks like" (Stuart, 2020, p. 67). Hence, the most depicted setting in Amsterdam drill music videos is, with a percentage of 49.1%, the public street. To invigorate the performed identity concerning life on the public street, Amsterdam drillers are also performing in front of brick walls (included in 28.9% of the music videos) with sometimes street graffiti on it (8.1%), in front of fences (19.7%), under viaducts (19.1%), in parking garages (16.8%), in parks

¹⁹ Balloons filled with nitrogen can be used as a drug if one inhales the nitrogen.

(12.7%), in front of a shop (12.1%), at street sports courts (11.6%), at construct sites (6.9%), industrial areas (5.2%), skate parks (1.7%) and at public playgrounds (1.7%).



Figure 18.- Flat as a visual reference to a represented neighbourhood



Figure 19.- Subway station as a visual reference to a represented neighbourhood



Figure 20.- Driller provocatively standing in front of a police car

Furthermore, as discussed above, the ‘super place attachment’ to the local neighbourhood is important in the drill subculture. Hence, Amsterdam drillers are frequently recorded in their neighbourhoods and identifiable places of those localities. By standing in front of flats (included in 36.4% of the music videos) and filming in flat stairways (24.2%), hallways (20.8%) and basement storages (17.3%), drillers visually symbolise their lives residing in these local flats. Moreover, drillers are using local malls (10.7%), churches (1.1%) and stadiums (0.6%) as identifiable settings to visually portray their presence in, and representation with, the neighbourhood. Also without the watcher possessing knowledge regarding the specific neighbourhood planning, its flats and other identifiable places, drillers make sure that they are filmed in a setting that unambiguously portrays the place they represent. For instance, as illustrated in figure 18, a driller from the drill group ‘*Kikkenstein Bende*’ (KSB) is standing in front of a flat with the same name as the represented street. Furthermore, in figure 19, a driller utilises a subway station of his represented neighbourhood as a material inscription to symbolise affiliation with this area.

Settings can also be used to portray antagonistic symbols. For instance, as illustrated in figure 20, some drillers symbolise their aversion towards authorities by provocatively standing in front of police cars (included in 2.3% of the music videos). Moreover, some music videos entail the ‘*opp block*’, meaning the represented neighbourhood of a rival, as a setting. In the drill subculture, drillers are expected to ‘defend’ their neighbourhood against opponents by being present in the streets at all times. If an opponent enters the other territory, this is dubbed an ‘*opp block tour*’ or ‘*glide*’. Opp block tours, or glides, challenge the authenticity of the opponent as he is supposedly absent on his own turf. Drillers are keen to record and disseminate their

presence on an ‘opp block’ during a ‘glide’ through social media posts, but also through music videos. For instance, figure 21 depicts a social media post of a driller on an opp block tour that is incorporated in a music video. Furthermore, figure 22 depicts a rival member of drill group FOG using the subway station of this rivalling territory as a setting throughout the entire music video. Similarly, figure 23 illustrates a group of young men standing in front of a flat where a rival member was murdered.



Figure 21.- Opp block tour



Figure 22.- Driller standing in front of subway station in rivalling territory



Figure 23.- Driller standing in front of flat where a rival was murdered

Showing antagonistic symbols by using settings as material inscriptions resembles mannerisms and imagery concerning territoriality in traditional gang culture. Roks (2019) argues that this imagery consists of “defensive and oftentimes violent mannerisms in which gangs claim and defend their ‘turf’” (p. 5). Once again, it has to be stressed that drillers are no gang members and that drill groups are no gangs. However, according to Brotherton (2008, as cited in Roks, 2019), youth in late modern societies are attracted to “the styles, imagery and messages of gang cultures, seeing in them individual and collective vehicles for identity, social solidarity, and placemaking” (p. 63). The resemblances of territorial conflicts between the drill subculture and traditional gang culture could, therefore, be derived from this obsession with gang symbols.

Amsterdam drillers seem to be copying many narratives, symbols and mannerisms of traditional gang culture. The above-discussed provocative settings of music videos feed into the appropriation of similar mannerisms centred around gang territoriality. With these mannerisms getting appropriated by Amsterdam drillers, conflicts surrounding territoriality in traditional gang culture are adapted to the local context of Amsterdam. Consequently, the interplay between global and local practices is part of a wider deterritorialisation process concerning territoriality in gang cultures as it produces “glocal territorial identities” (Massey, 1998, as cited in Roks, 2019). Subcultures, as Young (1999) notes, “are part of a global culture which is, in late modernity, very much a product of a market society” (p. 400). Thus, as images of traditional

gang culture are reproduced in a late modern digital mediascape, conflicts between Amsterdam drillers could be interpreted as *simulacra* of traditional gang conflicts. In his ethnographic study in Chicago, Stuart (2020) similarly proclaims that drillers have “learned to exploit the unique affordances provided by digital social media to capitalize on a burgeoning market for urban gang violence (or, more accurately, a market for the *representation* of urban gang violence)” (p. 2). The settings in Amsterdam drill music videos that function as provocative symbols by, for instance, standing on ‘opp blocks’ and in front of police cars capture the same representation of urban gang violence and its images. Indeed, “the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street” (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 259).

5.4. THE SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Behind every music video, there is a group that Stuart (2020) calls the “support personnel” (p. 63). This group consists of, amongst others, videographers, instrumental producers and bloggers who establish and recommodify the product. Of particular importance for visual symbols is the facilitating role of videographers due to their observable and manifest influence on music videos. They usually engage in the full process of constructing a music video; from recording the scenes and editing the visual material to digitally distributing it on social media platforms. Drillers can approach videographers to record a video clip which is subsequently uploaded on the YouTube page of the concerned driller or affiliated drill group. Furthermore, videographers could also upload a drill music video on their own established social media platform. YouTube platforms such as ‘Pressplay Media NL’, ‘SPTVNL’ and ‘Red Moons Studios’ have amassed a relatively large online following by uploading video clips that they have recorded for drillers.

Videographers use different techniques to invigorate the street-like and hypermasculine identity of the protagonists and enhance the dangerous, chaotic and violent atmosphere in the video clip. As illustrated in the description of the music video *de Pijp* at the beginning of this chapter, some scenes are shakingly filmed to purposely create a chaotic and disorienting effect. Moreover, videographers use short, visual and usually slow-motion fragments to capture the general — frequently dangerous and violent — context and setting of the video, which is identified by Stuart (2020) as “B-roll” (p. 72)²⁰. These B-roll fragments aim to provide the viewer of the video clip a sense of spatial presence in the setting of the music video. This resembles the

²⁰ For an example of B-roll shots, the first 25 seconds of the music video [‘Ghana’ by Zaf_G and Cizri from y.73 de Pijp](#) serve as a relevant example.

concept of ‘telepresence’ (Ferrell et al., 2015), which explores how we transfer our sense of spatial presence in networked publics and environments through the use of digital devices. Videographers technically do this by using B-roll fragments as a concrete instrument that aims to fulfil the dramaturgical technique of ‘dramatic realization’ (Goffman, 1959, as cited in van Vugt, 2020). Here, initially unnoticed aspects that confirm or amplify the desired performance are portrayed to symbolise a certain impression management. B-roll fragments do the same; they stress certain aspects of the setting to construct a presentation of self that perceives the neighbourhood — and therefore, the protagonists in the video clip — as dangerous and violent. In other words, “they’re accentuating the most distressing aspects for the sake of shock value” (Stuart, 2020, p. 75).

Hence, to portray the setting of the analysed video clips, B-roll fragments are used by capturing flats (included in 53.2% of the music videos), public buildings (23.7%), public streets (17.3%), street lights (9.8%), fences (9.3%), street name signs (8.1%), trees (8.1%), graffiti (5.8%), local shops and cafes (5.8%), statues (1.8%) and sports courts (0.6%). B-roll fragments also serve to symbolise a sensual feeling of danger or tension in the neighbourhood by capturing dilapidated buildings (10.4%), security cameras (9.3%), warning signs (8.1%) and ‘flickering’ exit signs (1.7%). These shots attempt to depict the neighbourhood drillers affiliate with as dangerous, feeding into the territorial stigmatisation of the neighbourhood (see Wacquant, 2007). Because of the intertwinement between drillers’ identity and their represented locality, this simultaneously enhances one’s dangerous persona. The danger of the music video is additionally invigorated by applying visual effects. By including burning torches (included in 34.1% of the music videos), other burning items (15%), smoke (10.4%) animated explosions (2.9%), red and blue police lights (2.3%) and fire in the background (1.2%) to the decor, a tense and ominous setting is being reinforced. Furthermore, B-roll fragments that portray police (wo)men (30.1%), police vehicles (15%) and police stations (2.3%) invigorate the deviant and resistant persona that drillers attempt to construct. Because the police usually show up to video recordings in public places, the inclusion of filming their presence feeds into the communication of being an authentically deviant or criminal driller. It simultaneously renders drillers ‘street cool’, meaning that they “display nonchalance to the notion of violating mainstream norms” (Ilan, 2015, p. 83).

Following drillers’ brand commodification, videographers commodify their own brands as well. By including their own name or ‘logo’ in the music videos (included in 90.8% of the music videos), they promote their own brand as a commodity. In doing so, videographers

affiliate themselves with this musical artefact and are accordingly part of its definite ‘art world’, as conceptualised by Becker (1976). Ultimately, videographers are part of a joint commercial effort that aims to commodify the product and their own artistic brands. Bauman’s (2007) concept of self-commodification eventually manifests itself in these efforts of videographers and drillers. Because of the contribution to this ‘art world’, individuals might relate videographers with conflicts that are communicated throughout the song or that are part of a performing driller’s persona and ‘commodified brand’. However, videographers are no part of a drill group and usually operate independently.

5.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to provide answers to the visual part of the following subquestions: “*what audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?*” and “*what do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?*”. The present chapter has, therefore, not solely identified but also elucidated the meanings of the visual symbols. These meanings are grounded in the representation of resistant attitudes thriving through the drill subculture and general street culture. Amsterdam drillers represent the embracement of their structural exclusion by appropriating the criminal and deviant label imposed by conventional society. Within the video clips, they do so through various embodied and material inscriptions. By wearing fashion attributes that hint at criminality, flaunting weapons, concealing faces through face masks and portraying certain dance moves, drillers construct a ‘violent imaginary’ that confirms or even reinforces the negative perceptions of conventional society. Drillers want to show that they are from the streets and, therefore, belong to both the drill subculture and general street culture resisting conventional society. The efforts of videographers to capture the street setting through the inclusion of B-roll and the worn sportswear and streetwear show the audience that, indeed, they *are* street. As it is important to be hypermasculine in the streets, drillers visually symbolise that they deal and use drugs, possess large sums of money and generally construct an identity based on violent criminality.

The fact that drillers’ fashion styles are not so much focused on showing material wealth elucidates that the mediated images of gangsta rap spiral away to match new local contexts in new times. Nevertheless, Amsterdam drill is heavily inspired by traditional gang culture, and this becomes apparent through symbolic uses of hand signs and territoriality that resemble its conventions and mannerisms. Drill symbols could, therefore, be seen as *simulacra* of gang culture in a late modern digitalised mediascape. However, this does not mean that drillers are

gang members and that drill groups are gangs. Contrarily, the hyperreality of Amsterdam drill solely consists of images that resemble and represent urban gang violence and conflicts. The images in video clips generally entail representations of one's resisting and violent self, of the conditions in the neighbourhood, and of a supposed lifestyle on the streets. The images become increasingly mediated, blurring any distinction between actuality and virtuality. Ultimately, the visual symbols of Amsterdam drill are situated in a hall of mirrors.

Amsterdam drillers see entrepreneurial opportunities in visually representing their resistance practices. They attract the agency to commodify — or *self-commodify* — their disadvantaged positions. This chapter has shown that drillers depict an artistic persona that is violent, criminal and street. By placing this constructed identity in a late modern context, this should be interpreted as part of a wider commodification process concerning crime and violence. On some occasions, the spirals pertaining to the mediated images are adjusted to fit new contexts. Whereas weapons are commodified to match the desires of late modern consumer societies, the materials are transformed into child-esque toy guns that ostensibly look more innocent. Similarly, face masks are transformed into a commodified fashion style that loses its initial function of hiding one's identity. The meanings of these mediated images are, therefore, continuously redefined and accordingly spiral away further from initial meanings through late modern commodification developments.

Although the hall of mirrors pertaining to the visual symbols of Amsterdam drill blurs distinctions between what is actual and fictional, it does not mean that we should perceive the representations of the artistic personas as identical to the individual that manufactures them. Drillers commodify their artistic brands, using merchandise to promote them and showing explicit images of violent criminality to support them. These images are eventually part of an entrepreneurial quest towards online infamy, and in order to achieve this, the construction of an online identity prevails over one's actual identity. Videographers similarly have interests in depicting shocking images for commercial value. Recordings of police on the film sets, B-roll fragments, visual effects and chaotic recording techniques contribute to the construction of a dangerous, fearful and deviant image amongst drillers. Amsterdam drillers are, therefore, not even entirely in charge of what their musical performances visually look like. Thus, perceiving their visually represented online reputation as literal would be 'street illiterate'. They are hyperreal representations of a commodified artistic brand that resists conventional society but does not necessarily reflect reality. However, as the term 'music videos' already imply, Amsterdam drill music videos consist of more than solely 'videos'. We should listen as well.

CHAPTER 6 | THE AUDIO SYMBOLS OF AMSTERDAM DRILL

The visual symbols in Amsterdam drill music videos are always accompanied by what drill is eventually all about: music. Therefore, this chapter will explicate the identified symbols in Amsterdam drill music videos that are communicated via audio. In doing so, it will answer the audio part of the following two subquestions: “*what audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?*” and “*what do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?*”. The data are based on the results and logbook of content analysis and meaningful insights derived from netnographic fieldwork. The results are presented alongside translated quotes from lyrics in the analysed music videos and transcribed excerpts of media interviews. The lyrics quotes are accompanied with QR codes that the reader can scan with a digital device, or that he or she can click on when this document is read digitally. The QR code will take the reader to the exact time fragment of the discussed quote, so the reader can sense the lyrics and the music him or herself.

First, the terminology of Amsterdam drill lyrics will be discussed. Second, the identified micro-narratives, meaning narratives that are meaningful within the drill subculture and wider street culture, will be interpreted. Third, the role and influence of instrumental producers as the support personnel for audio symbols are outlined. Fourth, and lastly, a brief conclusion of this chapter will be provided. Hence, it will offer a full answer to the two above-mentioned subquestions.

6.1. TERMINOLOGY

As discussed in chapter 4, the lingo of Amsterdam drill can oftentimes be hard to fathom. The vocabulary and terminology are influenced by the Dutch, French, Surinamese, Papiamentu, Arabic, and (British) English official languages and street languages. For instance, inspired by street language in the banlieues of France, Amsterdam drill is rife with terms that are literally turned around. To substantiate, ‘*heet*’, as the Dutch word for ‘hot’, is written and spoken as ‘*teeh*’. Without providing a full overview of the lingo in Amsterdam drill²¹, insights into the use of the lingo in terminological contexts that are considered noteworthy for the present research design are discussed in this subchapter. Here, ‘terminology’ refers to the explication

²¹ Nonetheless, as Amsterdam drill lingo is heavily inspired by UK drill lingo and general Dutch street language, the best overview could be found by combining the ‘*Smibanese Woordenboek*’ (Soortkill, 2019) and a Reddit post by username SSGrant401 (2018) who constructed a UK drill *slang* cheat sheet. Moreover, Roks and van den Broek (2020, pp. 161-163) provide a brief account of the most significant terms in their study to Rotterdam drill.

of words and expressions “that has a precise meaning in some uses or is peculiar to a science, art, profession, or subject” (‘Term’, n.d.) — in this case, the field of the Amsterdam drill subculture. It will be evident in this section that the terminologies used by members of the Amsterdam drill subculture oftentimes entail meaningful symbols.

First of all, Amsterdam drillers occasionally refer to individuals that are not considered as a part of the drill subculture as ‘*civilians*’ or ‘*neeks*’²². Whilst this does not solely position those positioned outside of the drill subculture as part of conventional society by referring to them as civilised individuals, it also implies that drillers communicate feelings of exclusion from this same society. In doing so, drillers represent resistance towards their structural exclusion by embracing subcultural inclusion. By demarcating a binary distinction between ‘drillers’ and ‘non-drillers’, whilst placing the former outside of the conventional sphere and the latter inside of the conventional sphere, drillers are simultaneously feeling included and excluded. This concurrent feeling of inclusion and exclusion from mainstream society is characteristic of late modern times, where social bulimia thrives (Young, 1999). Within the ‘us versus them’ mentality created by this distinction, it is impossible to define either group as solely included or excluded. Inclusion and exclusion are rather conflated in a bulimic world, and the terminology of ‘*civilians*’ and ‘*neeks*’ amongst drillers evidence this. Note how Lowkey, member of drill group *FOG*, raps on *Lightwork Freestyle*:

*“Getback gang for RS I retaliate
Step on your block with that rocket
You’re not going to make it to that launch
Civilians look at the scene like “fuck””*



Furthermore, VL from drill group *Z42* raps on ‘*Lightwork freestyle*’:

*“Long side thing [big knife] that’s my baby baby
Civilians think it’s crazy”*



²² The term ‘neek’ is a portmanteau of the words ‘nerd’ and ‘geek’.

The notion that civilians seem to be frightened by the drill scene does not solely accentuate the performance of being a dangerous driller. It distinguishes drillers from conventional society, which simultaneously stresses their unconventionality through exclusion from this society. The feeling amongst drillers to be excluded from conventional society also becomes apparent in a documentary by NTR, where reporter Ismail Ilgün talks with driller VK:

I: How did you experience growing up in this neighbourhood?

VK: Honestly, headaches man bro. Headaches. This neighbourhood has given me headaches since a young age man. Honestly bro, I come from nothing bro. I come from nothing bro. I had to fucking eat bread with nothing bro. My pockets wear empty, empty, friend, empty. Nothing to eat bro. I'm from broken homes dude. Yes, bro. That's what you see here in South.

I: And how did that affect you?

VK: It made me who I am today. I had to work hard for everything, bro. Nothing is free, nothing. My mother had two jobs bro. I had to steal on the streets bro.

I: But you can work, right?

VK: Yes, that's possible. But yeah, are you going to wait four weeks until you got your money? You got sisters, you got parents. What are you going to do?" (Ilgün, 2020a).

When one considers the neighbourhoods that are represented by most of the Amsterdam drillers, predominantly being neighbourhoods in Amsterdam South-East and Amsterdam New-West, social exclusion and poverty are indeed problematic here (Cozy, 2020). However, as Stuart (2020) similarly notes in his ethnographic study on Chicagoan drillers, their structural exclusion is accompanied by a desire to feel appreciated, to be cared for, to belong, to feel loved, and ultimately, to feel included:

"For these young men, if anyone is naïve, it's their neighbors who still buy in to the conventional mythology. Besides, of all their options, the attention economy is the only one that treats their background as an asset rather than a deficit. Why should they continue trying to appease demeaning teachers and scornful bosses when swarms of social media fans not only accept their biographies but celebrate them?" (p. 43)

Thus, these forces simultaneously absorb and reject, accept and deny, swallow and eject, include and exclude. Drillers embrace their excluded identity and have the agency to construct

it as something positive within the drill subculture by performing a tough and hypermasculine persona. This resembles the analysis of Ferrell (1999) on criminal subcultures, where he notes that the social bulimia in late modernity “blurs the notion of criminal and non-criminal, of good guy and bad guy, of hero and crooks” (p. 400). Society might label them as a menace, but within the drill subculture this is what Ilan (2015) notes as ‘street cool’. Here, drillers appear “to set one’s own rules and to display nonchalance to the notion of violating mainstream norms” (p. 83). It is the rules of their subculture that matters to them; not the rules of conventional society, of the civilised, of ‘civilians’ and ‘neeks’. However, they are heavily influenced by what society sets as normal and how they perceive the drill subculture. In the words of Nightingale (1993), this is not a matter of a lack of culture or a matter of a deviant subculture that is entirely alienated from conventional society. Amsterdam drillers are actually heavily influenced by the norms, values and labels of conventional society, perceiving in them instruments to construct an artistic identity that confirms the negative label. Rather than perceiving the Amsterdam drill subculture as excluded from conventional society, it should be perceived as having a symbiotic relationship with mainstream contentions. They are using these contentions to build an identity that would be meaningless without the label of conventional society.

Due to the bulimic conditions of liquid modernity, inclusion in the drill subculture can still concur with exclusion from the same subculture. Individuals who are actually considered to be a member of the drill subculture but are refraining from participating in conflicts are dubbed ‘midfielders’. As chapter 7 will explore further, there are mixed views within the drill subculture on whether this is perceived as sensible or ‘weak’ and whether this person is accordingly a ‘real’ and authentic driller or not. Thus, even within the drill subculture inclusion and exclusion are intermeshed based on the notion of authenticity. A driller could be defined as a driller and therefore be included in the drill subculture, whilst simultaneously, he could get be excluded from the social field of ‘authentic drillers’ due to his non-combative attitude. The centrifugal and centripetal forces of our bulimic society seem to be omnipresent as they operate both outside and inside the drill subculture.

Moreover, terms referring to Satan or the devil are frequently encountered. For instance, two Amsterdam drillers refer to each other as being a ‘devilish duo’, two other drillers produce a song with the title ‘Demon Twin’, another driller states that he “talks with Satan” and oftentimes an audio effect is deployed where the voice is transformed into a lower-pitched, devilish-esque voice. Again, the terminological references to the ascription of a devilish persona could be perceived as an embracement of the label that conventional society puts on them, consequently

resisting conventional society and including oneself in the drill subculture. Indeed, profiling oneself as devilish is ‘street cool’ because it “involves appearing to set one’s own rules and to display nonchalance to the notion of violating mainstream norms” (Ilan, 2015, p. 83). This is supported by the identified audio symbols regarding emotions. If Amsterdam drillers mention terms of emotions, they averagely mention their apathy the most with an average of 0.29 times per minute (t/m), followed by being mad (0.13 t/m), hating authorities (0.09 t/m), being distrustful (0.05 t/m) and the enjoyment of perpetrating violence (0.04 t/m). Noteworthy is that the emotions of missing someone (0.02 t/m), grieve (0.01 t/m) and happiness (0.005 t/m) are mentioned the least. This implies a certain tendency amongst drillers to express themselves as selfish and apathetic; but when emotions are actually communicated, these are usually emotions of hate, distrust and ‘*schadenfreude*’²³. These emotions can be related to the inclination of constructing one’s own norms and nonchalance towards violating mainstream norms by presenting a devilish presentation of self. In other words, drillers are digitally and musically performing a ‘street cool’ devilish persona by affectively displaying insensitivity and distrust towards others, attaining pleasure out of hurting someone else and generally being in a hateful emotional state.

However, the subcultural style of being ‘devilish’ also feeds into late modern consumer societies. Portraying oneself as ‘devilish’, or as a ‘demon’, contributes to the construction of a careless, deviant, dangerous and hypermasculine persona. According to Perry (2004), a hypermasculine persona in rap should be understood as symbolising “the black person who refuses to submit to the rules of society, who is fearless and unruly, and who laughs at rules of appropriateness and social regulation” (p. 29). Drillers attempt to construct a persona that mocks conventional society in an unruly, careless, fearless, and therefore devilish way, whilst additionally incorporating drill’s central notion of violence. As chapter 7 will further elucidate, this is what drill consumers desire to see and hear. In an online interview, driller KL from drill group *EDG* acknowledges that consumers want to hear a devilish persona. In his music, KL generally uses a screaming voice that, according to him and online drill consumers, sounds ‘devilish’:

“One time, I was in the studio and I told my friend ‘I’m gonna scream, let me scream on this track’. The whole track was hard as shit. So I decided to scream on my tracks

²³ *Schadenfreude* is an English word inspired by the German language that defines the emotion pertaining to “a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction when something bad happens to someone else” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-b)

and then yeah, now you got the screaming drill guy who sounds like a demon. And everybody likes it.” (GabMorrison, 2020a)

KL acknowledges that the assessments of others contributed to his choice to scream in his songs. Because ‘everybody likes it’, he appropriated the label of being that ‘drill guy who sounds like a demon’. Again, labelling oneself as being ‘devilish’ or as a ‘demon’ does not make the individual that manufactures such as persona deviant, criminal or unruly. KL describes his artistic identity in the third person by referring to ‘the screaming drill guy who sounds like a demon’. In doing so, he simultaneously makes a distinction between himself and the devilish identity of his artistic persona. A street literate reading of the terminologies concerning ‘devilish’ and ‘demon’ would be to perceive this as a response to the desires of late modern consumer societies. By embracing the identity that society puts on them, turning it into a subcultural style that includes those who were initially excluded, and commodifying this style as a part of their marketable artistic brand, drillers have learnt to commodify the label that society puts on them. They have attracted agency to take advantage of their disadvantaged social position by getting in charge of their own narratives and accordingly sell this as an artistic brand. Thus, whereas conventional society perceives them as a menace, they perceive in this label entrepreneurial opportunities that match a late modern consumer society.

Besides the performance of ‘being devilish’ to be perceived as a hypermasculine, ‘street cool’, violent and dangerous persona, drillers additionally communicate mantras²⁴ to construct the same kind of persona. Four types of functions are identified amongst the mantras expressed in Amsterdam drill. First, Amsterdam drillers use mantras consisting of expressions that resist law enforcement agencies. For instance, by using the term ‘free’ as a prefix to incarcerated peers averagely 0.3 times per minute (t/m), drillers symbolically communicate that they want someone to be released from jail. This simultaneously implies that Amsterdam drillers want to appear ‘street cool’ by resisting conventional norms and nonchalantly set their own rules concerning incarceration. This is evidenced even more as Amsterdam drillers communicate the mantra of ‘not talking to the police’ (0.13 t/m) and, as discussed earlier as well, copy the mantra of ‘no face, no case’ (0.08 t/m) from UK drill. Note how Nytje from drill group #34 raps on the song ‘On Job’:

²⁴ A mantra is “a word or phrase that is often repeated and expresses a particular strong belief” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a)

*“I don’t fuck with you, I am on myself
 Free, free all my boys in jail
 They are in jail, feels like a hell
 But they do not talk and that is what counts”*



Second, Amsterdam drillers use mantras that refer to violence-related emotions. By stating that their ‘head is hot’ (averagely 0.18 times per minute), they imply that they are in an emotional state where they are, or can quickly turn, angry and violent. Hence, this terminology feeds into the construction of a ‘violent imaginary’ amongst the artistic persona. Driller T.Y from drill group *73 de Pijp* stresses how his head is hot and accordingly raps about the urge of stabbing someone on the song ‘*de Pijp*’:

*“I’m in the hood
 Head it hot
 Looking for a t [100,000 euros]
 Don’t come close or I splash [stab] man’s face”*



Third, drillers refer to the unsafety and danger of their represented neighbourhoods to invigorate their dangerous persona. The ‘block’, being the local neighbourhood, can also be ‘hot’. By using this mantra averagely 0.55 times per minute, drillers symbolise that the neighbourhood has recently become more dangerous to enter because of ongoing conflicts and has, therefore, become unsafe. Driller Gibbie raps about the ‘hood’ being ‘hot’ on the song ‘*de Wijk*’:

*“The hood is hot in wintertime [3x]
 You cook something [make crack] but you fuck it up
 L is hot, extended [magazine] on Glock
 Officer keeps my niggers locked
 S chefs [stabs] but is no cop
 You’re on race [stealing]? Man you do no fuck
 Free all my boys in jock [jail]
 They are soon back on this spot [2x]*



This is the hood and the hood is hot

Gibbie stresses the conditions in his ‘hot’ neighbourhood, where weapons, violence and resistance towards authorities are omnipresent. As a manifestation of ‘territorial stigmatisation’ concerning his own neighbourhood (see Wacquant, 2007), this simultaneously enhances the ‘violent imaginary’ that he attempts to construct. The local neighbourhood is an important element of drillers’ identity through the phenomenon of ‘super place attachment’ (see Kintrea et al., 2008). Hence, labelling the represented neighbourhood as ‘dangerous’ reinforces the dangerous identity of a driller’s persona. This does not necessarily mean that these neighbourhoods are actually unsafe and dangerous; portraying them as such suffices to contribute to their violent identity. With Anderson (1999) postulating that “people are likely to assume that a person who comes from a “bad” area is bad” (p. 77), this performance resists such mainstream perceptions of dangerous neighbourhoods as inherently bad. Contrarily, drillers attract the agency to reclaim what is good and bad by defining a supposedly ‘bad’ neighbourhood as status-enhancing in their own subculture.

Fourth, Amsterdam drillers use mantras that refer to violent acts that have happened or that is awaiting someone. They use the mantras of ‘jump out’ (0.16 t/m) and ‘hop off’ (0.03 t/m) as prefixes symbolising a drive-by shooting or stabbing, and ‘(no) get back’ as symbolising (a lack of) violent retaliation. In doing so, Amsterdam drillers use these mantras to enhance the construction of their ‘violent imaginaries’ (see Schröder & Schmidt, 2001). Driller KL from drill group *EDG* uses these mantras on his collaboration song with KV Savage named ‘*Lockdown Sesssies*’:

*“Hop off that ped [scooter] and kwef [stab] him
G is crazy intention is cheffing
I am on a glide with demons
Hop off that thing and I see men stress
Bro bro has that Rammy [Rambo knife] on his right
Wenk [stab] him, flick that Rems [Rambo knife] in your
clothes
Jump out, I am on that strip [street] with bears
All those fucking men will learn”*



By using the mantras ‘jump out’ and ‘hop off’, KL is describing him and his friend doing drive-by stabbings. Although we should, again, not perceive these descriptions as the literal truth, the mantras are contributing to the ‘violent imaginary’ of KL’s artistic persona. The violent and deviant performance through the use of these mantras is another phenomenon that could be interpreted as part of the broader late modern trend where violence gets commodified and transgression gets marketed.

6.2. MICRO-NARRATIVES

Besides the use of specific words or word combinations, Amsterdam drillers use narratives as a wider storytelling technique. Narratives are defined as “symbolic actions, words and/or deeds, that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). It encompasses relevancy to real and fictive realities, stories of living and those of imagination. Of particular importance in the present research design are micro-narratives, defined as narratives “that are created in groups and learning environments and are uniquely relevant to the members of those groups” (Devine et al., 2014, p. 274). Micro-narratives can be used to construct, maintain and shape the artistic identity of Amsterdam drillers.

In Amsterdam drill, symbolic ‘disses’ are omnipresent micro-narratives. As the abbreviation of ‘disrespect’, they are the narrated insults towards others that serve as means to degrade the authenticity and legitimacy of competitors. Disses simultaneously promote one’s own legitimate position in the field — being a position above the insulted competitor. Resembling the social dynamics in the ‘intergang field’ as posited by Lauger (2012), gossip and disses are a way of negotiating and reconstructing the social boundaries and hierarchies of who is legitimate, and to what extent. Disses take on various themes, such as arguing that a competitor breaks the street cultural norms, questioning his authenticity by stating that he is ‘capping’ — meaning to be fake or lying — bringing up and ridiculing past violent events where the competitor was a (supposed) victim, ridiculing his friends and family, and generally stating that he is ‘lame’, a ‘pussy’ or ‘bad’ in what he is doing. Therefore, by employing disses, drillers negotiate what is deemed legitimate and what mannerisms are following the subcultural norms.

The micro-narratives of ‘dissing’ take on different forms and different extents of explicitness. On the one side, in 82.7% of the Amsterdam drill music videos, drillers never diss a competitor by explicitly stating his name. These disses are therefore implicit and targeted at general ‘opps’, ‘opp boys’, ‘neeks’ or ‘pussies’. Note how BerryVHW from drill group *Lelyland Spartans*

disses ‘opp boys’ and ‘bitch boys’ without providing any name or indication as to whom he is addressing the diss:

*“Opp boy you hide on your own block
 But I still found him
 Scam his dad
 And I fuck his daughter
 She gives me top [oral sex] early in the morning
 So it was a good morning
 Want that bands [money] can’t wait until tomorrow
 I jump in your house and leave with the loot
 And all my worries are gone
 Bitch boy you are a cherry [softie]
 Freeze mode, he goes Ben & Jerry [freezing of fear]
 Bitch boy is being sweet with us
 But with you bitch boy is playing scary”*



On the other side, in 17.3% of the music videos, drillers do explicitly diss one or more competitors by naming their artist names, respective initials, drill groups or represented territories. On the ‘*Lightwork Freestyle*’ of Scovic from drill group #34, he explicitly addresses his disses to rappers Serra.C and Ballin30:

*“Ask Serra.C what I did in his end [neighbourhood]
 I learn that man a lesson
 Knocked that man over
 Bossed [punched] on that man’s mouth
 And Ballin30 the next guy
 But that kills [guy] did not even show up
 I was with shh and shh
 Went back to his end
 But that man responded later
 What I am saying are facts, no cap [lies]
 Ballin30 is stressed
 Fucking hobo, no stacks [money]*



His hairline is far

That cross on that fucking head is fucking dirty

Your armpit smell like lean [mixture of codeine and soda drinks consumed as drugs]

Bro come here you can learn from me

Criminal practices, what the fuck did you guys do?

You are all junkies one by one, I never hear from you guys on the streets”

The persons to whom Scovic addresses his disses are clear for the audience. However, similar to what Stuart (2016) observed, “there’s an in-between kind, which to an outsider sounds like generic disses but is actually very targeted” (para. 11). For instance, the earlier mentioned embodied inscriptions in which drillers ‘put a K on’ rival hand signs by drawing a mimed — or real — pistol next to it can be perceived as such a diss. Although these types of disses have not been quantitatively analysed due to the complexity of identifying them²⁵, they are in some cases identified through audio expressions. For instance, KSB member Karma K, who engages in a conflict between drill groups KSB and FOG, employs these forms of disses in two songs. First, ‘*No Getback*’, a song targeted at FOG and centred around the absence of retaliation after a FOG member was murdered and another member was stabbed, was uploaded exactly a year after this fatal incident. Within the song, the instrumental and rapping temporarily stops and an audio fragment start playing instead. This audio fragment belongs to a video clip recorded shortly after a FOG member is stabbed; the watcher can hear his screams of pain whilst getting medical care from the ambulance staff. Furthermore, in a short fragment on the song ‘*Vision*’, Karma K provocatively employs a rhythm and intonation that is copied from a song by a FOG member who was fatally stabbed, allegedly by members of KSB. These manifestations within the songs of Karma K are exemplary of ostensibly general expressions that are in fact very targeted disses. The crux to understanding these disses is the attainment of contextual knowledge regarding the Dutch and Amsterdam drill scene and the pertaining significant events. In terms of Ilan (2020), one must be street literate to identify and understand the underlying contexts of these disses.

Amsterdam drillers also symbolically threaten other, usually unidentified, competitors. For instance, these micro-narratives concretely entail the likes of ‘if you want it you can get it’ with an average of 0.27 t/m (t/m), ‘you do not want this/it/beef’ (0.23 t/m), ‘do not come close’ (0.17

²⁵ These types of disses are automatically incorporated in the frequencies of ‘implicitly addressed disses’ because this proved to be virtually impossible to objectively identify.

t/m), ‘do not make me mad’ (0.08 t/m) or ‘I will find you’ (0.06 t/m). The use of threats as micro-narratives in Amsterdam drill become apparent in the song ‘*Violent Talk*’ by driller GW14:

*“So many neeks [portmanteau of ‘nerd’ and ‘geek’] are
lucky
He doesn’t want beef because he sees that pressure
Banana clip [rifle magazine] with a scary stick [firearm]
If I get that tip bro, I get that shit
Red dot sign if I aim at you
All neeks have to be in a spliff [joint]²⁶
But I don’t even keef [smoke]
Raincoat with loaded waps [weapons]
I will get your stash [money] and that in a race [robbery]
Even if you wear a vest, I will spray on your body
Or my goon bosses on your fucking brains”*



These threats are not solely used to communicate antagonistic expressions towards oftentimes unidentified competitors. They also serve to uphold a reputation in which drillers communicate a clear potential to be violent to a wide audience. In order to gain respect, Anderson (1999) argues, one must be perceived as tough and subsequently “display [...] a certain predisposition to violence” (p. 72). As Lauger (2012) argues, this predisposition is only attained by the subjective judgements of an audience. Communicating a willingness to perpetrate violence must therefore be credible to the listeners. This simultaneously constructs a hypermasculine persona by symbolising “ideals of toughness, respect and the use of violence to resolve disputes” (Lauger, 2012, p. 120). Thus, drillers might use music videos as a vehicle to construct, shape and disseminate the predisposition to violence amongst their artistic and hypermasculine persona to a wide digital public. If the audience perceives these threats as credible, this could subsequently lead to the attainment of respect and therefore, a more legitimate position in the field. In terms of Sandberg (2008), the reputation of potentially becoming violent quickly, and

²⁶ In the drill subculture, putting someone in a spliff is a commonly used diss where individuals refer to smoking the ashes of a dead person. It is considered one of the rudest disses.

therefore the attainment of a certain mastery towards violence, enhances the ‘street capital’ pertaining to the *artistic* persona.

Amsterdam drillers do not solely describe the potential violence that awaits opponents; they also frequently deploy, reproduce and describe micro-narratives of past violent incidents, whether fiction or fact. For example, English-speaking driller AR from Amsterdam based drill group *EDG* raps the following on the song ‘3 the guys’:

*“Experienced drillers
Gripping on spinners [revolvers]
Jumping out of them dingers [cars]
Hunt down niggers, cut ‘em like scissors
Winning the beef, just look at the figures
Step to the cut [location that is hard to find] and wet [stab]
men, wet men
I warn men not to test man
Chuloo is a fucking dead man
We ain’t riding out for the net [internet] fam [family; in a friendly way]”*



By retelling these acts of violence, drillers hint at the perpetration of it and subsequently construct a violent identity amongst their artistic persona. They do so abundantly as they communicate, amongst other micro-narratives, acts of stabbing someone averagely 1.13 times per minute, shooting someone or someone’s house averagely 1.11 times per minute, generally ‘getting’ someone averagely 0.89 times per minute, and killing someone averagely 0.35 times per minute. Again, it is important to note that these violent events should not be taken literally as this would be ‘street illiterate’ (Ilan, 2020). Thus, in line with contentions inherent to late modernism, the distinction between fact and fiction evaporates as it is not solely clear whether the micro-narratives are facts, but also whether the violent identity of a driller is based on facts or fiction. The tension field of this distinction is also notable amongst online drill consumers who — as chapter 7 will elucidate — invest in numerous discussions concerning the authenticity of drillers.

The blurring distinction between fact and fiction is something that Amsterdam drillers ultimately highlight by expressing their own authenticity. In other words, they attempt to

discard any potential discrepancy between fact and fiction by communicating micro-narratives that confirm the authenticity of their constructed identities. This is mostly done by stressing their life on the streets and that they are ‘never lacking’ (averagely 0.55 t/m) — meaning that they are never engaged in situations that are not ‘street’ (Stuart, 2020, p. 12). Furthermore, by stating that the police is looking for them (0.22 t/m), claiming to speak the truth and not lie (0.21 t/m), telling that they are *really* doing what is said (0.2 t/m), refuting authenticity-challenging claims of others (0.19 t/m), upholding to perpetrate deviant and violent acts all by themselves (0.08 t/m), and by positing that they are criminal since a young age (0.07 t/m), they attempt to illuminate that they are ‘living what they are rapping about’. Some of these micro-narratives are found in the following lyrics by driller Hmizo on the song ‘*Architect*’:

*“Hey Taytje, talk with them
Please tell them who are real
Who are on the streets for a long time
I am in the field like Bergwijn [football player]
I am with your bitch she really gives me brain, really gives
me brain [oral sex]
So much neck she got neck pain
Blue [police] is keeping an eye on me again
But the chance that I will get caught again is really low”*



Hmizo wants to convince the listener that he is real, living a street life, that the police is really looking for him, but that he is such a good criminal that they will not catch him. These are micro-narratives that attempt to confirm the authenticity of his own artistic persona, implying that there is no distinction between his artistic identity and the identity of his everyday life. In other words, he wants to convince the audience that he is not *capping* — meaning ‘lying’ — about what he is rapping. As Stuart (2020) notes, the “dynamics of context collapse — which digital aspirants use to convey a singular, coherent identity across multiple social contexts — make it increasingly difficult to fully separate their online, branded self from their offline lives” (p. 126). However, it is virtually impossible for drillers to *always* uphold their online branded persona in their everyday lives. Later on in his work, Stuarsts (2020) namely continues by stating that “[i]t’s a well-known truth that even those with the fiercest reputations for violence can’t live up to these personas during every minute of every day. They have let their guard down at *some point*” (p. 129). In an NTR documentary, Ilgün (2020b) has a conversation with

Oppchaser, a Dutch driller from Den Helder, who talks about the discrepancy between his artistic reputation and everyday life:

“I: It’s a fact that music does not always work. So, what are you going to do when this does not work?”

OC: Yes, I have a job as well. I won’t beat about the bush. That’s just how I am.”

Oppchaser later continues about his artistic persona:

“OC: You never know who will catch something about you and use it against you, you know. So it is actually a shield that you wear at all times, so you won’t get too close, you get me?”

Hence, perceiving the artistic persona as the literal truth would, indeed, be ‘street illiterate’. As Oppchaser similarly notes, drillers have to erase their ‘shield’ at certain moments and certain places, such as during their job. However, drillers attempt to catch each other in non-conventional situations and disseminate this moment across the internet — a phenomenon discussed in chapter 2 which is called ‘catching someone lacking’. Consequently, this constitutes an omnipresent battleground between taking up conventional roles or roles related to their artistic persona. Thus, using micro-narratives in drill music as a vehicle to confirm one’s authenticity invigorates the tension in this battleground, pressuring drillers to fulfil the impossible task of upholding one’s reputation *at all times*. It is within this battleground that Roks (2020) argues that authenticity within rap music has entered the realm of hyperreality. Forasmuch as the distinction of real and fake is blurred, so too could no one distinguish between the realness and fictionalities of drillers’ personas. By drawing upon the commonly used mantra of ‘keeping it real’, which rappers use to confirm their authenticity, Roks (2020) argues that “rap culture has morphed into the act of “keeping it hyperreal”, with a quest beyond authenticity in constructing street credibility” (p. 282). Hence, the micro-narratives that attempt to confirm one’s authenticity deserve a street literate reading in which promoting oneself as such has proven commercial value. Challenges of one’s authenticity are, supported by drill’s hyperreality, rapidly and easily rebutted as fact and fiction are indistinguishable.

Another type of micro-narrative drillers use to confirm their authenticity is to publicly display their supposed mastery of criminal activities. If the audience perceives this mastery as

legitimate, these micro-narratives contribute to enhance one's street capital. Hence, criminal activities such as stealing (averagely 0.88 t/m), dealing drugs (0.41 t/ms) and swindling (0.2 t/m) are communicated to symbolise the possession of street capital. Note how RR, a member of drill group *EDG*, attempts to communicate his possession of street capital by convincing the audience that he masters the perpetration of crime throughout his entire life:

*“I was fifteen years old, I had no paper
So I started robbing, racing [robbing] goofies and dealing
haze [weed]
I grew up with criminals but I also got a lot from them
I used to learn how to break bread [share money]
What happened with that sweet R from the flat block?
You were always so cute
Why do you push that crack [deal crack] now?
Well because my cash was really low”*



The lyrics seem to additionally imply resistance from the disadvantaged economic position in his early adolescence. Hence, according to him, he started to ‘deal haze’ and ‘push crack’; micro-narratives that are similarly used in Dutch and international *trap* music, which could be seen as the musical predecessor of drill rap (Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 17). A recent study on Italian trap culture noted how the “meanings of crime ascribed by the members of such [Italian trap] culture have been shown to be negotiated interpretatively and symbolically for public consumption by circulating as entertainment in a way to confound the reality and virtuality of the mediated performance” (Sidoti, 2020, p. 88). In Amsterdam drill, it is similarly significant to consider that mediated performances do not have to consist of actual events or identities. Using micro-narratives that resist conventional society and imply an authentic criminal lifestyle enhances the marketable product of street capital amongst drillers. With late modern developments commodifying crime and violence, and street capital relying on “the actor’s mastery of criminal activity and violence” (Sandberg, 2008, p. 157), communicating the possession of street capital can be instrumentally used by drillers to match the desires of contemporary consumer societies. In other words, street capital is commodified in drillers’ quest towards being ‘hyperreal’ (cf. Roks, 2020).

In all of the micro-narratives quoted above, some elements could be positioned on the weaker side of the street cultural spectrum. These entail more expressive and performative street cultural styles, fashions and symbols that are not necessarily related to crime or violence. Therefore, micro-narratives in Amsterdam drill do not solely contain symbols that are positioned on one side of the street cultural spectrum. Rather, symbols are found throughout the entire spectrum. The scale of this spectrum ranges from a strong adherence to the code of the street and its accompanying violence to more fashionable, expressive and performative symbols on the weaker side of the spectrum. In micro-narratives concerning Amsterdam drill, three main themes are identified that are positioned on the weaker side of the spectrum. These are micro-narratives concerning money and luxurious fashion attributes, loyalty to one's friends from the neighbourhood and hyper-heterosexuality. These three themes become apparent in the following rap fragment of Cizri from drill group *y.73 de Pijp* on the song 'Listen Up!:

*“GG [gucci] bag and that stone on side [logo on the sleeve
of Stone Island clothes]
Two men on ped [scooter] with Tony on ride
Or with Absko, my bro bro for life
Free Stackzy, that is also my slime
Bring back T.Y
Bitch, she does [peep sound]”*



First, micro-narratives consisting of bragging about luxury fashion attributes imply a tendency to stress material and financial wealth. Cizri raps about wearing Gucci bags and Stone Island clothes. Chapter 5 noted that, according to Nightingale (1993), individuals who are structurally excluded attempt to compensate for this exclusion by flaunting with luxurious brands. According to Kubrin (2005), these practices of conspicuous consumption infiltrate gangsta rap as a means for rappers to gain respect. Although, as chapter 5 also discussed, most Amsterdam drillers seem to refrain from wearing expensive luxury brands in music videos, this could not necessarily be generalised to the full population of Amsterdam drillers. Communicating micro-narratives of bragging about financial wealth and material success could, therefore, be an instrument used to symbolise a hypermasculine identity (Lerner & Kubrin, 2021, p. 24). This does, however, not necessarily mean that these micro-narratives are used as a means for individuals to compensate for their exclusion from conventional society. Drill's hyperreality makes it difficult to discern whether the symbols are fact or fiction. The styles and symbols of

gangsta culture are widely appropriated by individuals in late modern societies who have no affiliations with gangs or gangsta culture. Hence, it is unclear whether bragging about financial and material success is shaped by the street or by the screen. It is rather a continuous interplay between both fields, rendering references to actual reality irrelevant.

Second, glorifying and paying tributes to friends from the same neighbourhood symbolises loyalty to their local peers. Cizri mentions incarcerated and wanted friends, hence symbolising a strong affiliation with his social circle. In de Jong's (2007) ethnographic study on Moroccan youth in Amsterdam New-West, he identifies seven core street values. For street cultural members, one of these values is to be loyal to their 'homies' from the neighbourhood. Threats from outside the neighbourhood and social group need to be fended off collectively, whilst betraying, or 'snitching', the group is considered as the worst sin. Therefore, micro-narratives that stress loyalty to one's friends in the neighbourhood aims to show that he adheres to this street value.

Third, micro-narratives on the weaker side of the street cultural spectrum entail hyper-heterosexual themes in which women get sexually objectified. The last sentence in the above-mentioned quote implies that a girl, whom Cizri calls a 'bitch', is performing sexual acts with him. Communicating micro-narratives consisting of the sexual objectification of women and that brag about being extremely sexually active enhances the hypermasculine identity (Lerner & Kubrin, 2021, p. 24). Amsterdam drillers oftentimes attempt to communicate that they are '*doing this bad b [bitch]*', that a '*gyallie [girl] is on me*' and that they get '*head*', '*neck*' or '*brain*' — meaning to receive oral sex. This feeds into the hypermasculine identity that they attempt to communicate throughout their songs.

6.3. THE SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Whereas the video clips of the music videos are dependent on the efforts of videographers, the music has its fundamentals in the endeavours of instrumental producers. In this subchapter, the aesthetical symbols in Amsterdam drill production are outlined through the role of these instrumental producers. Concretely, they are the individuals who are composing the 'beats', meaning the instrumentals on the song, and are mixing the end product, meaning to refine the song by adding certain compositional audio techniques. Instrumental producers are, together with videographers, part of the 'art world' of the end product. In a similar fashion as videographers, 69.4% of the music videos entail the commodification and promotion of their

artistic persona as a marketable product by applying an audio ‘producer tag’. This means that the artist name of the instrumental producer is hearable at the beginning or end of the song. Although it is noteworthy that certain instrumental producers collaborate frequently with the same drillers or drill group, they are usually not recognised as ‘members’ of drill groups and, therefore, operate independently.

The influence of instrumental producers in the musical artefacts explicitly manifests itself through the *beat*. Although some components such as, amongst others, sliding 808 riffs, frequent use of snares and distorted basses are characteristic of drill instrumentals, beats are not homogeneous. Some beats are slower-paced than others, some are derived from US drill whilst others from UK drill, and some have a low pitch with a ‘dark’ aura whilst others are high-pitched and energetic — sometimes even sounding joyful and happy through fast-paced and mellow piano melodies. Notable is that beats from drillers representing New-West are averagely higher-pitched and fast-paced than in other city districts²⁷. The beats ultimately construct and transfer a certain aura that partly determines the sensual experience of listening to a song. Instrumental producers can therefore contribute to the image that a driller attempts to construct through the application of aesthetical symbols. In the process that is called ‘mixing and mastering’, certain techniques are applied in which audio tracks are adjusted, combined and refined in order to be ready for distribution. Whereas the production of the beat serves as the aesthetical fundament at the beginning of the compositional process, the mixing and mastering procedure refines and integrates the ‘rap’ with the instrumentals at the end of the compositional process. Six mixing and mastering techniques are identified that can function to symbolise, accentuate and invigorate some transgressive and violent expressions in the song’s lyrics.

The first mix and master technique is at the beginning of the song. Here sensationalist sentences that are communicated throughout the entire song are placed after each other in a tension-building introduction. Present in 45.7% of the analysed music videos, this technique might serve to highlight certain narratives and terminologies that are sensationalist, transgressive and based on violence. The second mix and mastering technique is also at the beginning of the song, where audio excerpts of news media coverage concerning criminal incidents are hearable. These are usually fragments of journalists describing where and how a criminal act has occurred, which adds to the criminal identity that drillers attempt to construct. The third mix and mastering

²⁷ As mentioned earlier, the present data could not provide reasons *why* such deterritorialised differences exist throughout Amsterdam city districts. Hence, this could be subject to further research.

technique is the incorporation of ‘adlibs’, which is used in 79.2% of the analysed Amsterdam drill music videos. Adlibs mean the impulsive sounds or words drillers make between the sentences they are rapping. Some concrete instances of adlibs are low-pitched growls to sound dangerous, shouting ‘*ching! ching!*’ and ‘*dip, splash!*’ to refer to the act of stabbing, and the immediate repetitive mentioning of a word they have lyrically rapped to accentuate this term. The fourth mix and master technique, which is used in 65.9% of the songs, is to shortly remove the beat whilst continuing to rap the lyrics. This way, the lyrics of the driller can be heard more clearly and certain narratives and terminology in drill music are accentuated. The fifth mix and master technique entails the censoring of words by editing the lyrical audio fragment. For instance, words can be interchanged with ‘coin sounds’ that censor names of supposed victims from violent incidents that the performing driller or drill group has perpetrated. Here, the ‘coin sound’ resembles the sound that is played when a coin or a point is gained in video games. This symbolises the attainment of a ‘point’ in the drill subculture due to a physical assault on an opponent. It simultaneously resembles the earlier mentioned ‘in-between’ kind of disses identified by Stuart (2016). In this regard, the coin sound may seem generic for an outsider, but with contextual knowledge, it is actually very targeted at a victim. The sixth, and last, mix and master technique is by deploying the earlier mentioned devilish-esque, low-pitched and dark sound effect on the voice of the driller. This effect reinforces a dark aura and contributes to the dangerous identity that drillers might want to create. Thus, instrumental producers can add a selection of sensationalist sentences and news media excerpts at the introduction, deploy adlibs between sentences, transform the voice into a darker pitched sound, remove fragments from beats and interchange certain words with audio effects in order to accentuate transgressive, and sometimes violent, symbols.

6.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to answer the audio part of the following subquestions: “*what audio and visual symbols are present in the Amsterdam drill scene?*” and “*what do the audio and visual symbols in the Amsterdam drill scene mean?*”. Amsterdam drillers use terminologies and micro-narratives to resist conventional society. Drillers distinguish themselves from conventional society by calling themselves demons and devilish, whilst calling those outside of the drill subculture civilians and *neeks*. Similarly, mantras and micro-narratives that resist law enforcement agencies, label the represented neighbourhood as dangerous and brag about one’s mastery of criminality are communicated to distinguish their mannerisms, beliefs and norms

from those of conventional society. However, paradoxically, they simultaneously embrace their exclusion by perceiving these labels as valued characteristics in their own subculture.

Amsterdam drillers have appropriated the label that society has put on them and accordingly transformed this negative label into something that is valued within their own subculture. The concurrent feelings of structural exclusion and subcultural inclusion could be interpreted as part of the bulimic conditions of late modernity. Here, inclusion and exclusion are intermeshed to the extent that an individual or group could be neither entirely included nor excluded. There are constant centrifugal and centripetal forces that absorb and reject masses of people. Whereas conventional society perceives drillers' micro-narratives and terminologies as a confirmation of their label, Amsterdam drillers consider this 'street cool'. Hence, expressing resistance towards conventional society has become part of constructing a deviant, hypermasculine, 'street cool' persona. They have attracted the agency to redefine the norms surrounding their individual, group and local identities within their own subculture.

To convince the audience that they are indeed the artistic persona they claim to be, Amsterdam drillers use micro-narratives to confirm their own authenticity. However, it is virtually impossible to uphold this persona at all times. We should, therefore, not take this constructed identity literally. Instead, it should be noted that the lines between fact and fiction have become blurred, but not disappeared. Drillers indeed resist conventional society and embrace an identity of violent criminality, but we should also acknowledge that this persona sells. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish what is commodified resistance and what is actual resistance. This hyperreal situation, driven by late modern forces of commodification, renders the confirmation of one's authenticity a vain quest. It has become impossible for drillers to 'keep it real', but instead they keep it 'hyperreal' (see Roks, 2020). Similarly, within this realm of *simulacra*, the resistant symbols of Amsterdam drill could not be derived from either actual reality or fictional performances. The street and the screen are intermeshed.

Considering the late modern trend where violence and transgression become commodified, late modern consumer societies support drillers' nonconventional identities. Consumers yearn to see a violent and criminal persona amongst drillers, and drillers feed into this desire through audio symbols in four distinct ways. First, they communicate mantras and micro-narratives in which they retell violent incidents and diss and threaten others in various degrees of implicitness and explicitness. Second, supported by mixing and mastering techniques of instrumental producers, the performance of a violent identity is enhanced through the deployment of aesthetical audio techniques. Third, to further invigorate their violent persona, drillers must also

sound hypermasculine. They do this by communicating micro-narratives that sexually objectify women, that express loyalty to their friends, and that symbolises conspicuous consumption practices. Fourth, and lastly, communicating a certain possession of street capital adds to the construction of a violent criminal identity as well. Drillers do this by convincing the audience that they master acts of crime and violence. Consequently, a predisposition to violence, a hypermasculine identity, and the possession and communication of street capital have become commodified.

Hence, the drill subculture is driven by late modern consumption economies that widen the gap between inclusion and exclusion. This is to say that late modern consumer societies yearn to see deviant, criminal, violent, hypermasculine and ‘street cool’ personas, offering drillers ammunition to invigorate such a persona. Drillers have to increasingly represent exclusion from conventional society to feel more included in the drill subculture. Therefore, the bulimic conditions inherent in the drill subculture have, as yet another commodified phenomenon, also fallen prey to late modern commodification developments. The conventionally excluded persona has been packaged as a ‘street cool’, stylistic and marketable identity in mainstream consumer economies. Paradoxically, conventional society and the drill subculture are heavily interdependent. Drillers are neither entirely alienated from conventional society nor lacking culture; the symbols they use are actually derived from mainstream culture. Amsterdam drillers appropriate the labels of conventional society to construct an identity that would otherwise be meaningless. They possess the agency to make it a label that is valued within their own subculture, but also to transform it into a commodifiable product that is used to satisfy the suppressed desires of late modern consumption societies. Instead of perceiving drill as alienated from conventional society, they actually complement a demand of illicit pleasures that thrive through mainstream societies in late modernity. In this regard, the relationship between the drill subculture is as symbiotic as the classical economy theory of supply and demand. We should not solely look at the purveyors of Amsterdam drill to understand the symbolic meanings. We have to look at the consumers as well. It is time to meet the public.

CHAPTER 7 | MEETING THE PUBLIC

The previous two chapters discussed the Amsterdam drill symbols and their meanings. These symbols are used by the producers of Amsterdam drill and are accordingly received by an online audience. The present chapter will therefore delve into the ways online drill consumers interpret and use the symbols of the Dutch drill subculture in online social interactions. In doing so, it aims to answer the third, and final, subquestion: “*How do consumers interpret and use the symbols of Amsterdam drill in online social interaction?*”. In the context of the present thesis, then, these online drill consumers are defined as *individuals who participate in online interactions that are centred around the subject of drill*. They are situated in the drill subculture and wider street culture, with the latter term being “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in the opposition to [feelings of] exclusion from mainstream society” (Bourgeois, 2003, p. 8).

First, the digital infrastructures of the social media platforms as the current research locations, and their influence on online behaviour, are discussed in the subchapter below. The following subchapter will explore the commodification and recommodification of and by online drill consumers. Thereafter, the reactions and use of aesthetical and thematic symbols amongst online drill consumers are discussed in the two succeeding subchapters. Subsequently, the next subchapter will reflect on similar mannerisms between drillers and online drill consumers. Thenceforth, this chapter will explore the discussions concerning the authenticity of drillers’ symbolically communicated personas. As locality is an important element in the authenticity of drillers, but also in the social interactions amongst consumers, the following subchapter will embark on the role that locality plays. In light of the contested statuses related to localities, the next two subchapters will discuss the contradictions that prevail throughout the drill subculture and wider street culture. At last, the role that consumers and digital affordances have in violent reputations of drillers are debated, whilst closing off with a brief conclusion.

7.1. THE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF ONLINE DRILL REALMS

The social media platforms Telegram, Instagram and YouTube function as the research location of the current netnographic approach. As became apparent during online fieldwork, the digital infrastructures that are based on the affordances of networked publics are partly contributing to the ways their users interact with each other (boyd, 2014; Ellison & Vitak, 2015). By drawing upon a digital criminological approach, it is explicated how the digital infrastructure shapes the

behaviour of online drill consumers. First, networked publics on Telegram are provided with a relatively high amount of formal and informal social control. Telegram group chats closely resemble online communities in which certain social rules are established. Users can be informally sanctioned by corrective comments on their behaviour or formally sanctioned by being kicked out of the group or worse, being banned. As discussions are usually more extensive and in-depth than other social media platforms, this simultaneously stimulates gossip amongst consumers as the probability that drillers do not see their comments is relatively large. Second, networked publics situated on Instagram are mainly centred around the artistic persona and the responses of consumers. Most of the time positive comments towards drillers and their productions are made; the relatively little amount of antagonistic discussions amongst consumers are usually sparked by a hateful comment directed towards the driller of the concerned post they are commenting on. Third, social interactions amongst consumers on YouTube are predominantly focused on the symbols portrayed in the respective music videos, but also on the persona of the artists involved. So-called ‘scoreboard tallies’ are discussed in which points to drillers who physically assaulted another individual are given by consumers with references to past violent incidents. As opposed to personal accounts on Instagram, users on YouTube are generally more anonymous. Consequently, conflicts amongst consumers arise relatively regularly as the kinds of formal and informal social control inherent in Telegram remain relatively absent.

7.2. COMMODIFYING CONSUMERS

“Who wants to buy or trade shooter 3.0 private message me!”

Taking a cultural criminological stance, drill should be positioned in late modern consumption economies. Indeed, Lynes et al (2020) state, “[i]f we are to construct a useful account of the relationship between drill music and violence, the first step should be to place this specific musical subgenre in the context of contemporary consumer culture” (p. 1202). Signs of hyperconsumerism, in which Bauman (2007) alluded to the constant state of consumerist desire, are manifested in the online drill community. Consumers are constantly desiring, expecting or demanding drillers to produce regularly, to collaborate with other artists, to put their songs on streaming services and to release songs instantly after distributing a ‘teaser’²⁸. As can be seen in figure 24, a high frequency of production amongst drillers is rewarded with positive

²⁸ A teaser is a short fragment of a future released song to get consumers excited.



Figure 24.- “Finally, rappers who don’t release the trailer three months ahead so I have to wait fucking [loose translation of ‘kanker’ as a curse word literally translating to ‘cancer’] long. Luckily, this one was released quickly.”



Figure 25.- “Drop that shit earlier man you always let us wait”

feedback, whilst figure 25 illustrates the negative feedback resulting from lacking a high frequency in production.

Amsterdam drillers are efficiently feeding into this consumerist demand by commodifying themselves, and especially their online ‘following’, as marketable products. On the one hand, namely, drillers commodify their followers by offering their online account as a platform on which interested parties could promote anything they want to in exchange for a financial transaction. For instance, illustrated in figure 26, an Amsterdam driller provides a price list for promotion on his personal story or Instagram page. The promotion would accordingly reach his relatively wide online following, making it attractive for third parties to reach a certain target group. On the other hand, drillers commodify their followers by using them as a means to gain free access to marketable products that would otherwise necessitate financial transactions, such as free *beats*, singers or girls for in their music videos. In the words of Stuart (2020), drillers

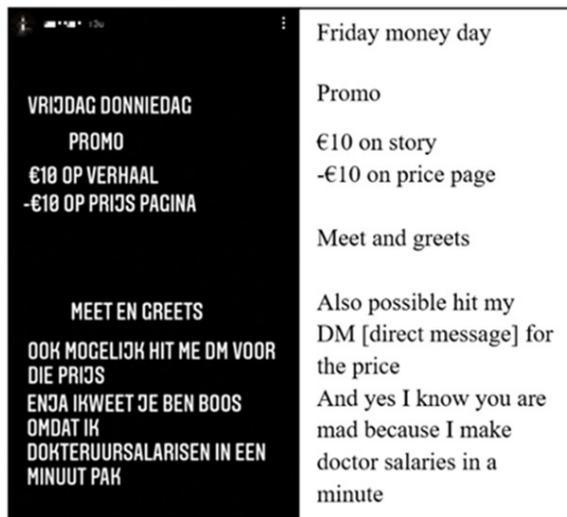


Figure 26.- Commodification of followers: translation to the right

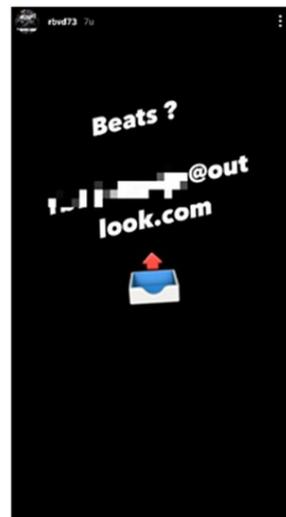


Figure 27.- “Beats? [mail]@outlook.com 📧”



Figure 28.- “Ladies who can sing DM me”

“tend to view them [online followers] instrumentally, approaching them as a readily exploitable resource” (p. 106). Examples of such manifestations are depicted in figures 27 and 28. The phenomena of drillers who commodify their consumers as marketable products are manifestations of a contemporary consumer society. Bauman (2007) stated in *Consuming Life* that late modern societies have transformed into consumer societies consisting entirely of consumer commodities. In other words, we have commodified ourselves to be consumed by others whilst we similarly consume others as commodities. Drill producers engage in similar processes of self-commodification, offering themselves — or rather their online profile — as a marketable promotion commodity whilst approaching their online following as commodities that can be exploited.

The title of this subchapter is twofold. As discussed above, drillers are ‘commodifying consumers’ as marketable products. However, consumers are also actors who are, in the progressive verb tense, ‘commodifying’ — or even *re-commodifying* — the products of drillers. They do so in three distinct ways. Firstly, as illustrated in figure 29, some consumers utilise the ‘editability’ affordance in networked publics to upload so-called ‘reaction videos’. Here, they record their reaction to a music video whilst watching and hearing it for the first time. Because many consumers from outside the Netherlands also make these videos, Dutch drill receives international attention. Secondly, also by using the editability affordance, some drill consumers upload fan-edited videos that play drill songs and visually present texts explaining the dynamics of a drill scene. Roks and van den Broek (2020, p. 133), in their study on Rotterdam drillers, call these practices ‘secondary production’. They state that secondary producers are usually highlighting conflicts for entertainment purposes. The earlier mentioned ‘scoreboard tallies’ are an exemplary manifestation of this. Thirdly, there are group chats on Telegram dedicated to the exchange of drill songs. Here, consumers collect drill songs, so they can exchange them for



Figure 29.- Reaction video

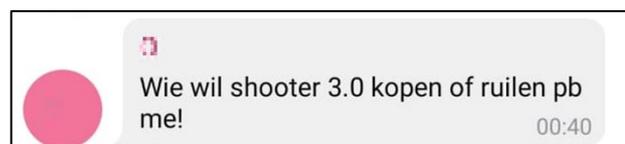


Figure 30.- “Who wants to buy or trade shooter 3.0 pm [private message] me!”

songs that other consumers possess. Occasionally, ‘leaked’ songs²⁹ are even offered by Telegram users in exchange for a financial transaction, as illustrated in figure 30.

These three distinct phenomena are manifestations of a late modern culture where individuals hedonistically want to consume and therefore, demand a constant rate of production from drillers. Whilst doing this, online drill consumers also contribute to the continuous commodification and recommodification of drill productions. As these recommodified products are, again, consumed by a wide audience, a constantly reciprocal amplification between consumption and commodification takes place. In this regard, drill consumers and producers construct a symbiotic relationship in which they jointly profit from each other’s efforts. Drill producers meet the hedonistic consumerist demand of consumers, whilst the consumers recommodify the products of producers. Here, the concept of ‘prosumption’ (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010) comes to bear as online drill consumers simultaneously produce and consume content. Online drill consumers do not solely consume digital and musical artefacts, but also actively engage in the production and reproduction of them and their meanings. Hence, online drill consumers contribute to the plethora of mediated images, their meanings and their representations in a late modern digital mediascape. For instance, by making ‘reaction videos’, they are continuously redefining the meanings of the images in drill music videos. In a short amount of time, they perceive the symbols, react to them, give meaning to them, and disseminate this to hundreds, thousands, or sometimes even hundreds of thousands of other online drill consumers. As they distribute the meanings they ascribe to these symbols to a wider audience, the meanings of mediated images are constantly spiralling away towards newer meanings. There are numerous ‘reactors’ to drill music videos online, creating a hall of mirrors that does not solely consist of mediated images constructed by drill producers. Contrarily, online drill consumers are actively creating and recreating mediated images and their meanings.

7.3. ASSESSING THE AESTHETICS

“Wow I felt really gangster whilst I listened to this, okay I will return to my minecraft house now.”

As online drill consumers hedonistically consume drill productions, they continuously encounter the aesthetics and symbolic themes discussed in chapters 5 and 6. This subchapter

²⁹ ‘Leaked’ songs are songs that have been publicly distributed to the wider public without the initial intention of the producer(s) of the song.

will outline the reactions of online drill consumers to the aesthetical symbols of music videos. Online drill consumers are strongly inclined to highlight the emotions that are evoked whilst watching and listening to a music video. Some consumers stress the emotion of getting angry or, as shown in figure 31, are experiencing an urge to commit criminal activities. Others highlight that they suddenly started dancing due to the energy of the song, felt calm whilst listening to it or, as figure 32 illustrates, even felt touched by the music video. Here, what they refer to in hip hop culture as ‘delivery’ is an important qualitative criterium to rate an artist. If drillers succeed in transferring a certain emotion to the consumers, this is perceived as a positively valued artistic quality.



Figure 31.- “Because of [driller] I want to rob my own house”



Figure 32.- “@[user] no man my opinion is just [drill group], you need to hear [driller] he puts his emotions in his text man you need to feel them not hear them”

Because the emotion that is transferred to the consumers is an important criterium in the assessments of music videos, the music does not necessarily have to *sound* technically good. Some consumers rather stress that, as long as it evokes the right emotions, drill or drillers can sound good even if the quality is not optimal; it is then *raw*. As figure 33 shows, rapping ‘offbeat’ — meaning to be out of rhythm — does not needfully degrade the qualities of the drillers as they still ‘come hard’ — meaning being ‘awesome’, ‘cool’ or ‘amazing’. As the perfect control experiment in which the linguistic symbols are not understood due to a language barrier, comments of non-Dutch speaking consumers are useful in understanding the importance of assessing aesthetical elements in drill production. Hence, figure 34 shows that it is not essential for consumers to understand linguistic symbols. The aesthetical elements of audio drill production could be perceived as equally important, if not more important. Thus, it illustrates that the way drill aesthetically *sounds* is crucial in the assessments of drill consumers — but also how it *looks*.



Figure 33.- “[driller A] is the [driller B] of [drill group], always off beat, but still comes hard”



Figure 34.- Non-Dutch speaking consumer assessing the aesthetics

Whereas the importance of the visual aspects in drill was discussed in chapter 5, online consumers rate the aesthetical elements of the video clips as well. Of particular importance is

the intervention of the videographers who fulfil the role of support personnel. Figure 35 exemplifies that consumers make a distinction in the editing techniques and recording quality of the video clips. These criteria serve as an integral part of the end product and are customarily assessed amongst online drill consumers. As opposed to the technical aspects of the music that do not always have to be of a high quality, online drill consumers usually desire the technical quality of video clips to be excellent so it could optimally depict “what the street looks like” (Stuart, 2020, p. 67). Central in the assessment of both audio and visual aesthetics is that it should sound *raw* and therefore, video clips also have to look *raw* and *uncensored*. Rapping offbeat is not an issue as long as you sound raw, whilst too much animated visual effects in the editing of videos would degrade the *rawness* of the video clip. Hence, through aesthetical elements, online drill consumers anticipate to experience the supposedly dangerous and violent neighbourhoods through their digital devices.



Figure 35.- “The one who filmed this can be proud of his camera and clipping techniques. But not proud of the edits. Could be better but the quality is really [loose translation] clean.”



Figure 36.- “Wow I felt really gangster whilst I listened to this, okay I will return to my minecraft house now.”

The phenomenon of symbolically experiencing the neighbourhood resembles the idea of ‘digital slumming’ (Stuart, 2020, p. 154). Here, consumers from outside the neighbourhood, usually residing in more affluent areas, want to experience what life in these supposedly poor neighbourhoods feels like. Instead of going to the neighbourhoods themselves, digital technologies allow them to utilise drill as a vehicle that enables them to ephemerally experience these areas safely from the screens on their digital devices. This resembles the concept of ‘telepresence’ as discussed in chapter 3, where actors are interacting with technological ‘actants’ that allow them to transfer their sense of spatial presence to the environment they enter through digital devices (Ferrell et al., 2015, pp. 172-173). Indeed, to recite a driller in Stuart’s (2020) ethnographic study, “the best videos are those that “take you there”” (p. 68). Figure 36 illustrates an exemplary manifestation of this concept, in which a consumer acknowledges that he or she felt ‘gangster’ whilst listening to it, subsequently returning to play a videogame. It allowed for the transitory change of a certain sensual state by experiencing the violent and

dangerous aura of the music video, whilst subsequently returning to conventional life by closing the music video.

This desire amongst online drill consumers to attain pleasure by experiencing the dangerous atmosphere of drill music videos is provoked by the overly economically organised world in late modernity. Mike Presdee (2000), in his renowned work *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, discusses the phenomenon where this economic world constitutes a widespread desire for oppositional forms of pleasure. This pleasure is achieved through the participation in, or consumption of, content depicting behaviour that is considered deviant by conventional society. The act of digital slumming could be interpreted as a part of our wider suppressed and contained desires that are fulfilled in cathartic ‘second lives’. The conflation of widespread commercialisation and the Internet supports the fulfilment of these desires as transgressive content, such as in Amsterdam drill music videos, is widely available. Hence, experiencing drill music videos that are rife with symbols that conventional society perceives as deviant and transgressive, evokes psychological relief amongst online drill consumers due to the fulfilment of these strongly suppressed desires. Indeed, “[t]he Internet is fast becoming the safe site of the second life of the people” (Presdee, 2000, p. 54). One can ephemerally ‘feel gangster’ and gain pleasure by watching and listening to drill music videos, rapidly fulfilling the suppressed and cathartic desires in his or her second life through consuming deviant and transgressive content, whilst subsequently returning to his or her everyday life. Thus, the commodified and deviant content of Amsterdam drill music videos could be instrumentally used as a vehicle for satisfying these suppressed illicit pleasures.

7.4. STUDYING THE SYMBOLS

“Remove this from youtube that tune is too hard and too violent 🍆🍆”

Besides the aesthetical elements, online drill consumers also discuss — albeit to a lesser extent — amongst each other which symbolic themes they wish to see or hear and which symbolic themes preferably not. When these manifest symbols are debated, this is generally limited to whether this music video was, for instance, ‘hard’, ‘fire’, ‘dirty’, ‘sick’, ‘disrespectful’, ‘devilish’ or ‘rude’, or rather ‘not hard’, ‘fake’, ‘bad’, ‘low quality’, ‘wack’, ‘weak’ or ‘nothing’. In doing so, they commonly recite or refer to ‘lines’ — meaning sentences — or inscriptions that are labelled as such, but a more in-depth examination or dialogue concerning these symbols regularly remains absent. As will be discussed in subchapter 7.6, debates

concerning the manifest symbols are simply overshadowed by the number of discussions concerning the authenticity of drillers' manufactured personas.

The desires to satisfy suppressed pleasures amongst consumers' second lives are manifested in the responses to symbols as well. As illustrated in figure 37, the cathartic longing towards violent content is a returning element which consumers keep stressing. The individual of this comment compliments the driller in the music video for incorporating 'too violent' symbols. Similarly, online drill consumers stress the use of disrespectful and rude symbols as a positively valued phenomenon. In figure 38, an online drill consumer notes that disrespect is what he wants to see in drill production. As the antonym of respect, which determines one's status in the street through the 'code of the street' as posed by Anderson (1999), showing disrespect is used as a vehicle in challenging the respect of opponents. Paradoxically, showing disrespect is an implicit way of gaining respect by simultaneously attempting to taking it from other identified or unidentified individuals or groups. Furthermore, online consumers often accentuate symbols that are, at least in their view, 'devilish'. For example, an online drill consumer in figure 39 recognises the locality of the music videos as a rude material inscription, or in his words 'devilish'.



Figure 37.- "Remove it from youtube that tune is too hard [good] and too violent 🔥🔥"



Figure 38.- "Disrespect next level that's what we love this is drill 🔥🔥"



Figure 39.- Referring to the setting of the music video, recognised as a material inscription, as 'devilish'.

The symbolic portrayals of weapons in music videos, perceived as 'material inscriptions' in chapter 5, are also recognised by online drill consumers as violent symbols. They contribute to the violent images of drill and the 'violent imaginaries' of drillers. Online drill consumers frequently respond to the portrayal of weapons by discussing what type of weapons they supposedly possess, the symbolic danger that arises from it or they state that they perceive it as something which is 'cool'. Figure 40 illustrates an online drill consumer who is impressed by the types of weapons they portray as he or she perceives it as dangerous — or 'crazy' — and hence, 'cool'. In figure 41, an online consumer similarly notes a driller possessing a machete, which is a long knife, and accordingly perceives it as something which symbolises anger



Figure 40.- “wtfff [what the fuck] choppas [rifles] and everything fucking [loose translation] crazy weapons”



Figure 41.- “[Driller A] carries that machete on his body 🔪🔪🔪”

and violence by adding the emoji’s ‘🔪🔪🔪’. Thus, weapons, as material inscriptions, are assessed by online drill consumers based on the violent and dangerous aura they symbolise.

The eagerness of online drill consumers to respond to the symbolic portrayal of weapons could be interpreted as a manifestation of late modern consumer societies. The cathartic second life posited by Presdee (2000), in which we want to satisfy our suppressed desires through illicit pleasures, supports the contention that online drill consumers want to see weapons in music videos. Experiencing the portrayal of weapons through music videos could satisfy the desire of attaining pleasure by consuming deviant and transgressive content. It allows for an ephemeral experience of excitement by watching this content safely from their digital screens. This simultaneously illuminates that the commodification of the drill subculture is heavily intertwined with conventional society. The commodified symbols, such as the portrayal of weapons, are influenced by the longings of conventional society. Drill can be seen as a manifestation of the commodification of violence intruding on different forms of entertainment. Hence, drill is not a music genre that emerges from an entirely alienated and excluded subculture, but is rather very much intertwined with mainstream culture through the suppressed desires for carnivalesque excitement.

Adding to Presdee’s (2000) contentions regarding ‘second lives’, Rentschler (2004) similarly argues that people can experience ‘voyeuristic pleasure’ in watching transgressive digital content, therefore constantly attracting them to similar deviant content. Hence, table 2 explores the differences in the mean numbers of views amongst Amsterdam drill music videos where weapons are present and absent. Although it has to be acknowledged that many other factors could decide whether someone would watch a music video or not, the T-tests show a significant difference between music videos in which a weapon is portrayed and music videos without weapon portrayal. This is to say that music videos in which weapons are portrayed, especially music videos containing the portrayal of knives, will be averagely viewed more than music videos without the portrayal of a weapon. Again, other factors could contribute to this difference in views. However, perceiving the numbers in the light of consumers’ eagerness to respond to

the portrayal of weapons in YouTube's comment sections, these differences could also be interpreted as a successful entrepreneurial strategy of drillers. Because subchapter 7.2 discussed the pressure amongst drillers to constantly produce new music, drillers could possibly stick to the portrayal of weapons as this has proven commercial value due to its violent nature. This shows that the portrayal of weapons could be another manifestation of the commodification of violence inherent in late modern developments, and that contemporary consumer societies are rewarding this content with more views.

Table 2.- T-test for differences in views between music videos where weapons are present and absent

Symbol	Presence of weapon		Absence of weapon		T-test
	N	Mean views	N	Mean views	sig
Weapon portrayal	73	396,121	100	180,720	0.011 ^a
Knife portrayal	53	435,586	120	199,189	0.024 ^a
Firearm portrayal	39	407,773	134	231,982	0.166 ^a

^a = equal variances not assumed through Levene's test; ^b = equal variances assumed through Levene's test

* = significant when $\alpha = 0.05$

Assuming that the number of views on YouTube videos could tell us something about the desires of the wider general public, then the content analysis enables further exploration of the symbolic preferences in music videos. By creating indexes, a more conceptual and abstract level is enabled within this exploration. The results are illustrated in additional table 1 at the end of this thesis and imply that, with $\alpha = 0.05$, the number of views has a significant positive correlation with the weighted frequency of certain manifest symbols and symbolic themes. These are the symbolic hand gesture of stabbing someone, lyrically referring to narratives of stabbing someone, the aggregation of all symbols centred around violence, the symbolic aggregation of retelling future or past physical assaults, the symbolic aggregation of all types of claims in which an opponent keeps avoiding conflicts, and the aggregation of all symbols concerning knives and stabbings. The common denominators throughout all these symbols generally entail the themes of violence and knives.

It should be acknowledged that, similar to the T-test analyses on weapons and views, the regression analyses are limited as other factors could influence the correlation between these symbols and the number of views. For instance, collaborations between artists, the popularity of a performing artist, the time that a music video is online and the number of subscribers to the respective YouTube channels are factors that should be taken into consideration. However,



Figure 42.- “I still don’t get that dissing of dead people. Yes okay, [it’s because of] views”



Figure 43.- “[Driller A] and [driller B] also have millions [of views] but that’s because of the sensation between them...”

when perceiving these insights in light of the longing for ‘rude’, ‘devilish’ and ‘disrespectful’ symbols amongst online drill consumers, these analyses could also hint at a wider and general desire for violent content. On Telegram, Instagram and YouTube, online drill consumers namely recognise the dissing of dead people, dissing people with a lot of *clout*³⁰, being one of the first to produce Dutch drill, the engagement in widely known drill beefs, being famous due to fatal stabbing incidents and a generally violent persona as symbolic themes that raise the number of views. These elements all have direct or indirect references to symbols of violence; as figures 42 and 43 depict, some online drill consumers imply that they are aware of the positive effect that disrespectful and violent symbols have on the number of views. So, although the correlation analyses can not prove that there is a clear effect of violent symbols on the number of views, the correlations could nevertheless support the earlier discussed contention that there is a widespread desire for experiencing violence. As Stuart (2020) similarly notes, “[t]he more violent we think they are, the more clicks and views they attract” (p. 101). Again, we see that violence is instrumentally becoming commodified and transgression is becoming marketed to match the desires of contemporary consumer societies where individuals want to satisfy their suppressed illicit pleasures and longings.

However, besides the positive reactions towards the manifest visual and audio symbols, online drill consumers can also be very critical of the symbols in music videos. According to them, terminologies such as ‘*stolen ped*’ (stolen scooter), ‘*back m’n rambo*’ (back my knife), ‘*wie is op wie*’ (who is on who) and ‘*gyallie*’ (girl) are regularly repeated in drill production. Online drill consumers perceive this as boring and annoying. Also, as shown in figure 44, some online drill consumers keep hinting at the constant communication of similar themes and incidents that



Figure 44.- “Again a [drill group] member who keeps on talking about [driller A] and [driller B], your points are running out. You keep on repeating yourselves 🤔🤔🤔”

³⁰ *Clout* is the amount of online attention someone attracts.

have occurred in the past. Furthermore, several consumers stress that the aesthetics, such as *flows* and *beats* are oftentimes the same in drill production and simply *too* bad in quality. All these critique points refer to a supposed lack of creativity and unprofessionalism through the constant reproduction of terminologies, manifest symbols and aesthetics.

The critique centred around the lack of creativity and unprofessionalism could be interpreted as, in the words of Presdee (2000), a lack of carnivalesque excitement. As figure 44 shows, the reproduction of similar deviant content can become boring — hence the ‘😞😞😞’ emojis. It fails to provoke exciting impulses that fulfil the suppressed desires of illicit pleasures through the consumption of *exciting* deviant content. In other words, the desired state of catharsis in the ‘second life’ of Amsterdam drill consumers remains unfulfilled. The deviant and violent content in Amsterdam drill is becoming reproduced to an extent that consumers become desensitised in watching and hearing the deviant visual and audio symbols. It has simply become boring.

7.5. MIRRORING MANNERISMS

“You have a butterfly in your bio fucking gay boy”

Although some consumers might criticise the symbols in Amsterdam drill, some display similar symbols and mannerisms in online interactions. For instance, the lingo and terminology used in drill production, derived from global drill culture and general street culture, are also manifested in online social interactions amongst consumers. Furthermore, some mannerisms in the drill subculture also resemble modes of interactions amongst online drill consumers. This is to say that conflicts between online drill consumers regularly entail, as Stuart (2020, p. 134) would call, the use of ‘calling bluffs’ by challenging each other to act on their claims. In doing so, they dare each other to meet in ‘real life’ so they could ‘settle’ the dispute or to come to each other’s neighbourhood. Figure 45 entails a conflict on Telegram in which a consumer claims to be in the neighbourhood of another consumer whilst evidencing this by sending a ‘live location’³¹. Similar to how drillers are representing and ‘defending’ a territory whilst daring others to enter it, some drill consumers display similar mannerisms and expressions. It should be noted that the degree to which these ‘bluffs’ are actually enacted upon by other online drill consumers is probably marginal, as most of the time the bluff remains limited to one message or the conflict simply does not last long enough and accordingly fades away. Moreover, online

³¹ Submitting a ‘live location’ is a function on Telegram which allows users to distribute the current location of his or her mobile phone.

drill consumers also use the technique of ‘cross-referencing’, as discovered amongst Chicagoan drillers by Stuart (2019, p. 198). Here, they utilise the ‘searchability’ affordance of networked publics to scour each other’s social media account and find compromising information that challenges the other’s supposed legitimacy or authenticity. As can be seen in figure 46, the simple inclusion of a butterfly in the ‘biography’³² of a user’s personal account could be ammunition for users to challenge the other’s authenticity or legitimacy.

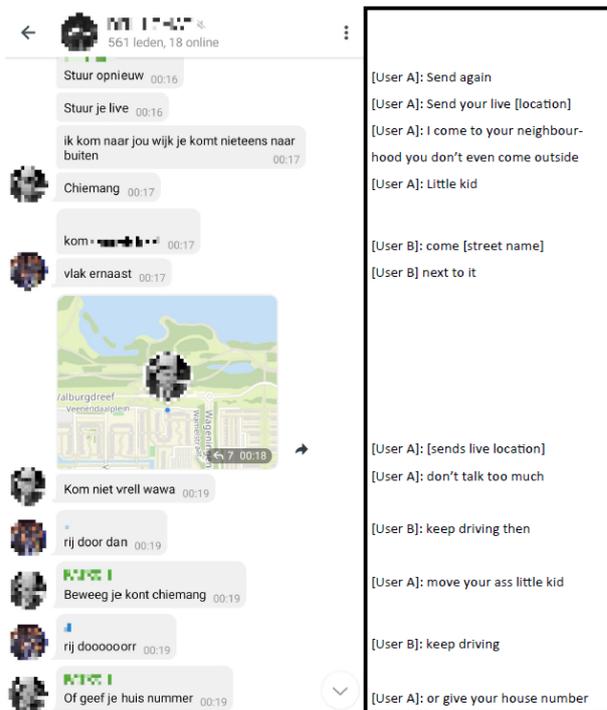


Figure 45.- ‘Calling bluffs’ between online drill consumers: translation to the right



Figure 46.- “You have a butterfly in your bio fucking [loose translation] gay boy”

These mannerisms are not necessarily copied or appropriated from drillers, but they could be interpreted as presumption practices of the mediated images and representations related to traditional gang conflicts on territoriality. Chapter 5 posed that references to representing and challenging territories in drill music are simulacra of traditional gang conflicts. They are *representations* of gang violence that continuously constitute newer meanings in the local and subcultural realm of Amsterdam drill rap. According to Brotherton (2008), youth in late modern societies are captivated by “the styles, imagery and messages of gang cultures, seeing in them individual and collective vehicles for identity, social solidarity, and placemaking” (p. 63). Hence, the meanings ascribed to the representations of urban gang violence are not only constructed by drillers; online drill consumers actively participate in ascribing meanings to those representations. In doing so, they do more than consuming the — representations of —

³² A biography is a brief summary about oneself that is displayed on one’s digital profile.

symbols in Amsterdam drill music as they actually use these symbols as a vehicle for creating an identity through similar mannerisms as in gang culture and gangsta rap. Again, it is manifested that online drill consumers are ‘prosuming’ symbolic meanings.

In this regard, the discussed mannerisms amongst online drill consumers are, just as the mannerisms of drillers, *performances*. Forasmuch as they do not solely consume, so too could online drill consumers produce an online persona. This takes the phenomenon of digital slumming one step further. Whereas some drill consumers only ephemerally consume and sense the violent aura of drill to fulfil suppressed desires safely from their digital screens, some also actively participate in this violent aura. In the words of Presdee (2000), they invigorate the catharsis of their second lives by consuming *and* participating in deviant behaviour that is influenced by deviant content. To be more precise, deviant behaviour is behaviour that conventional society deems as such. Hence, ‘calling bluffs’ and ‘cross-referencing’ as techniques to degrade one’s persona is also a way to construct a deviant and potentially violent persona for this individual him or herself. Thus, by *prosuming* the representations of gang violence in Amsterdam drill, online drill consumers attempt to fulfil personal pleasures that are achieved by active participation in deviant behaviour. Subsequently, this constructs an online persona for their ‘second lives’.

7.6. ASTONISHING ART OR AUTHENTIC ARTISTS?

“Pff I don’t even take them seriously because of that guy with that fake stone island hat”

Besides assessing the manifest symbols of drill production, the predominant subject for online social interactions amongst drill consumers are discussions on the authenticity and legitimacy of drillers. In other words, drill consumers seem to be more inclined to discuss or respond to the symbolically communicated persona of drillers rather than to discuss the manifest visual and audio symbols independent of drillers’ identities. Hence, we see the concept of ‘identity art’ as posed by Lauger and Desley (2018) being manifested in the Dutch drill subculture as well. Here, the assessments on music production are more centred around the identity of the performing artists rather than the quality of the music. Not solely the audio and visual symbols, but also the violent personas of drillers are becoming commodified. In the words of Bauman (2007), the identity of drillers are transformed into commodities through the process of self-commodification. Hence, late modern forces of commodification are not limited to the musical art of drill but extend to the persona of the performers.

As can be seen in figures 47 and 48, online drill consumers explicitly distinguish between drill *rappers* and *drillers*. The former term refers to the artistic persona, whilst the latter term refers to the violent lifestyle. Central in the distinction between drill rappers and drillers is the notion of ‘authenticity’: does this drill rapper actually live what he raps about? Or, in other words, is this drill rapper actually *drilling*?



Figure 47.- “[Driller] is not a driller he is a drill rapper. That man is not on that.”



Figure 47.- “But many people really forget that if you drill rap that you are not necessarily a driller 🐱🐱”

Online drill consumers use four distinct elements to discuss the authenticity of the symbolically constructed personas in drill music. First, as shown in figure 49, the authenticity amongst drillers depends on the validation of *whether* they have perpetrated violence or have been committing criminal activities. An empirical manifestation of this continuous and ongoing discussion is the phenomenon of ‘scoreboard tallies’ as depicted in figure 50. Here, online drill consumers construct scoreboards in comment sections and through fan-edited videos where they ascribe ‘points’ to drill groups or drillers if they believe that drillers have physically assaulted an opponent³³. Consumers heavily invest in discussions on whether certain violent incidents have actually occurred, who the perpetrators and victims are and if someone accordingly deserves a point. Additionally, they embark on discussions whether some drillers are as criminal as they claim to be by, for instance, alluding to whether they actually engage in drug dealing or not. Consequently, perpetrating violence and committing crime contribute to the construction of an *authentic* violent and criminal persona that drillers strive to attain.

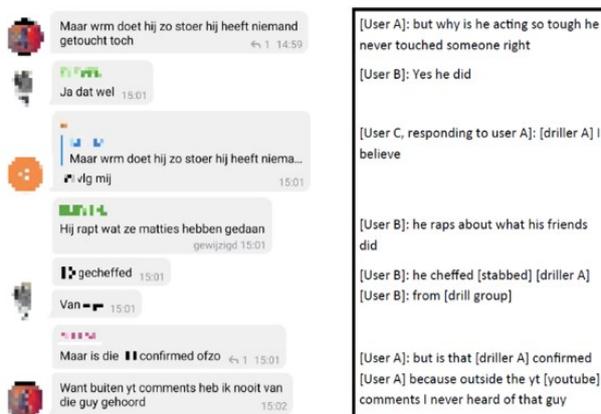


Figure 49.- Discussion on *whether* someone was involved in violent incident: translation to the right



Figure 50.- “[YouTube user] presents: NL drill Scoreboard of [drill group]”

³³ As will be evident in subchapter 7.8, the definition of a point is oftentimes ambiguous and contradictory.

The second element that is used to discuss the authenticity of drillers' personas is by assessing the *extent* to which violence and involvement in criminal activities are mastered. As opposed to the first element, which could be seen as the binary *distinction* between the fact and fiction of violent and criminal events, this criterium could be seen as the *extent* to which drillers or drill groups master violent criminality. Drawing upon Sandberg's (2008) concept of 'street capital', online drill consumers discuss the amount of street capital possessed by individual drillers and collective drill groups. In the case of 'scoreboards', this would refer to how many 'points' drill groups and drillers have attained. Thus, by discussing the extent to which online drill consumers possess certain amounts of 'street capital', they simultaneously discuss their authenticity.

Then, the third element that is used to discuss the authenticity of drillers is by drawing upon the material inscriptions that are portrayed in music videos. As discussed in chapter 5, material objects in music videos could function as symbols that enhance one's violent and criminal identity. As these objects are therefore interwoven with the personas of drillers, questioning the authenticity of these objects also challenges the authenticity of drillers. In doing so, figure 51 suggests that the portrayal of supposedly converted alarm pistols in music videos degrades the authenticity of the drillers that possess them. Opposingly, as discussed earlier in this chapter, showing many weapons that are perceived as real or authentic will incite positive reactions towards drillers' authenticity. Furthermore, an online drill consumer in figure 52 argues that he does not take a driller seriously because he wears 'fake' clothes. This shows that the *realness*, or authenticity, of the clothes worn by a driller is also linked to the authenticity of his persona.



Figure 51.- "[Driller] walks around with pierced alarm pistols. Just as whole [drill group]. Shit guys 😂"



Figure 52.- "Pff I don't even take them seriously because of that guy with that fake stone island hat"

The fourth, and last, element that is used to discuss the authenticity of drillers are their localities. Throughout this thesis, it has already become evident that locality serves as a fundamental element in the construction of drillers' identities. Therefore, compromising that drillers originate or have affiliations with a territory that is considered not violent, not criminal, or simply has not encountered 'territorial stigmatisation' (see Wacquant, 2007), challenges the deviant reputation they often attempt to symbolise. Depicted in figure 53, a consumer

illuminates discrepancies between the represented territory and a drillers' originating territory. This response does not solely allude to the contention that this driller is 'lying', but it also considers the originating territory as unauthentic. Indeed, as Lauger (2012) argues in his ethnographic study on gang culture in Indianapolis, if "someone had grown up or resided in those [authentic] areas, his or her ability to handle the streets was not immediately questioned. Youth from other parts of the city, however, were immediately perceived as being weak, or soft" (p. 87).



Figure 53.- "You are from North and this clip was also shot in North... so do not act as if you are from west side"

Thus, online drill consumers sometimes criticise the authenticity of individual drillers, but they oftentimes criticise the authenticity of the entire Dutch drill scene as well. In doing so, their critique resembles the dynamics inherent to the 'dilution narrative' as coined by Lauger (2012). Here, self-proclaimed 'original gang members' are using this narrative to acclaim that certain individuals identify with a notion of 'gang' that is too detached from the traditional idea of a 'gang' due to improper ways of accessing gangs. Although drillers are no 'gang members', the dynamics inherent to this narrative nevertheless manifest themselves amongst Dutch drill consumers through an 'international dilution narrative'. Consumers, namely, stress a lack of 'realness' and 'authenticity' in the Dutch drill scene when it is compared to the authenticity of other national drill scenes, usually those in the UK. Chapter 2 described that Dutch drillers are heavily influenced by UK drill. According to online drill consumers who are using the 'international dilution narrative', the local context of UK drill legitimises the use of dangerous symbols. However, according to the narrative, the Dutch drill scene is considered 'fake' because the Dutch local context lacks a dangerous, poor and violent stigma. Furthermore, whereas, for instance, the Chicagoan context caused drillers to enter the online attention economy because this was their only possibility to attain financial profits, the international dilution narrative stresses that Dutch drillers relate to these conditions in no way. By becoming distant towards the authentic and real establishment of a 'driller', drillers in the Netherlands supposedly "live what they rap instead of rap what they live". Hence, according to the online drill consumer portrayed in figure 54, Dutch drillers are too detached from the original and authentic notion of drill' or 'drillers' due to invalid ways of becoming a 'driller'.



Figure 54.- “Drill is not even street in NL. They are just UK fans who started living what they are rapping instead of rapping what they are living”

The international dilution narrative challenges the Baudrillardian contention that hyperreal contexts render references to actual reality irrelevant. As Dutch drill is a *representation* of violent gang culture, but also of other localised drill scenes, the Dutch drill scene is situated in a hall of mirrors. The images become increasingly mediated, consequently blurring any distinction between fact and fiction. However, online drill consumers who use the international dilution narrative accentuate that there is a distinction between the hyperreal representations of Dutch drill and the reality of the local contexts underpinning the Dutch drill scene. They challenge the authenticity of Dutch drillers by arguing that the ostensibly safe local reality does not match the hyperreal context of the Dutch drill scene. However, the expressions in figure 54 do acknowledge that, although the localised context does not legitimise their supposedly dangerous lifestyles, Dutch drillers nevertheless construct a dangerous persona. Despite the views of some consumers, drillers might perceive their local context as dangerous and base their performances on this assumption. Indeed, “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572).

7.7. LOCAL CAPITAL AND LOCAL STATUS

“You don’t even live in the Bims so better shut your mouth”

The concept of ‘super place attachment’ (Kintrea et al., 2008) teaches us that the localities of youth heavily influence their individual identities. This phenomenon is becoming explicitly manifested amongst drillers in the drill subculture. The prior subchapter has shown that localities on a national macro level, urban meso level and neighbourhood micro level are important elements in assessing the authenticity of drillers’ identities. However, localities shape the modes of interactions amongst online drill consumers as well. Although the digital ‘space of flows’ lacks a concrete physical territory, online drill consumers still consider each other’s

localities as important factors influencing the hierarchies within social interactions. Digital technologies enable youth who originate from different parts of the city and country to regularly interact with each other, constituting a digital mix of various localities. Consequently, the above-described interwovenness of authenticity and locality shapes social hierarchies and interactions amongst online drill consumers in networked publics.

Because of the relative anonymity of online networked publics, drill consumers attempt to verify their residence and representation of the neighbourhood by alluding to ‘local capital’. Through this concept, I aim to grasp the extent to which an individual possesses knowledge of his or her represented locality, its residents and their habitus. By successfully showing one’s local capital to online peers, online drill consumers are able to convince others that they legitimately represent the neighbourhood. As could be seen in figure 55, an online drill consumer attempts to convince online peers of his residence in Kraaiennest, a neighbourhood in Amsterdam South-East. However, another consumer questions his local capital by asking him to identify a very specific resident who, according to him, one could only know if he or she is really from Kraaiennest. Furthermore, in figure 56, an online drill consumer is ridiculed due to his lack of local capital by misspelling a street name.

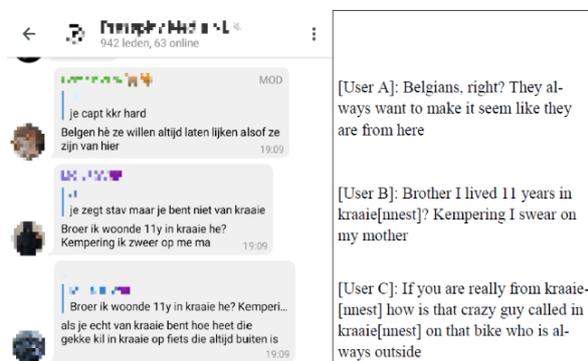


Figure 55.- Questioning local capital: translation to the right



Figure 56.- Ridiculing one’s local capital: translation to the right

Every locality has its own residents, originating from different echelons of society, possessing different types of habitus. Hence, the process of deterritorialisation affects the types of drill music throughout different localities. As illustrated in additional tables 2, 3, and 4, at the end of the thesis, T-test analyses show that drill music reflects the different local contexts through the use of different symbolic themes. For instance, drill music in Amsterdam South-East, where violence is a serious problem (Effting, 2021) consists of significantly more violent symbols than drill music in the aggregation of all other Amsterdam city districts. Similarly, the neighbourhood de Pijp has been dealing with many robberies and burglaries throughout the last decades (Bartels, 2013). These local conditions are reflected in the music of drillers

representing de Pijp, as the music consists of significantly more symbols concerning robberies and burglaries than other neighbourhoods. These local problems are not caused by the neighbourhood inhabitants or their musical preferences, but because of the disadvantaged socio-cultural and economic positions in respect to conventional society (Ilan, 2020). They are musical reflections that do not only show us the deterritorialised and localised nature of drill music, but also suggests that local capital could be based on different symbols and habitus. This musical reflection of local conditions also becomes manifested in the lingo of drill in Amsterdam New-West. A relatively big proportion of its inhabitants are of Moroccan and Turkish descent (van Wieren, 2017). Consequently, this is hearable in the music videos through the occasional utilisation of street language inspired by the Arabic language. Based on the prevalent symbols of one's own locality, individuals from different territories can hold various views on what symbols are important in defining one's local capital. As will be outlined in the following paragraphs, this can lead to many contradictory views.

Closely related to the dynamics of local capital, but more influential in determining one's position in social interactions amongst online drill consumers, is what I conceptualise as 'local status'. Following Anderson's (1999) postulate in which "people are likely to assume that a person who comes from a "bad" area is bad" (p. 77), online drill consumers continuously negotiate social hierarchies based on the legitimacy of how 'bad' one's locality is. In other words, they continuously define, redefine and demarcate both spatial and social boundaries of who is deemed legitimate due to his or her represented neighbourhood and respective local capital. In doing so, one's position in online interaction is largely dependent on the *perceived* local status. Thus, when online peers attempt to construct boundaries on who possesses a higher status, one's locality is important within their assessments. Local status similarly determines



Figure 57.- "You don't even live in the Bims [Bijlmer] so better shut your mouth"



Figure 58.- "Nephew [similar to 'brother'] you are from Flevoland hahaha why are you still talking. Or Lelystad but either way a dead neighbourhood and you are fighting with everyone here you got totally mad when [user] banned you for 30 minutes you are definitely autistic 😂"

the subjective legitimacy of making certain claims, as evidenced in figures 57 and 58. Here, online drill consumers are taking the locality of online peers as a reason to refute his or her legitimacy of expressing thoughts.

However, there are numerous views on which territories cause a higher local status. Online drill consumers continuously negotiate literal boundaries, being spatial boundaries, that define a certain degree of local status. These boundaries could be determined by localities that are included or excluded from certain neighbourhoods, cities, the metropole ‘*Randstad*’, urban areas, rural areas, affluent areas and poor areas. Individuals from different localities have different views on what is deemed a legitimately authentic and ‘bad’ area — which in their view is considered as status-enhancing. The fusion of all the different subjective perceptions on which areas determine a higher or lower local status ultimately produces complex, paradoxical and extremely vague definitions of local status. Although there seems to be an agreement that a ‘bad’ area is status-enhancing, there are different views on which locality is legitimately deemed bad and therefore, authentic. This phenomenon is manifested in figure 59 in which an online drill consumer complains about someone who argues that you cannot make judgements about someone if you are not from the same neighbourhood. Consequently, the person who is complained about is ridiculed by others as he is from an area that they consider as possessing a low local status. It is in light of this social interaction that it becomes paradoxical; there are a variety of online drill consumers who all have different ideas on when someone possesses a certain degree of local status to legitimately express thoughts or judge others.

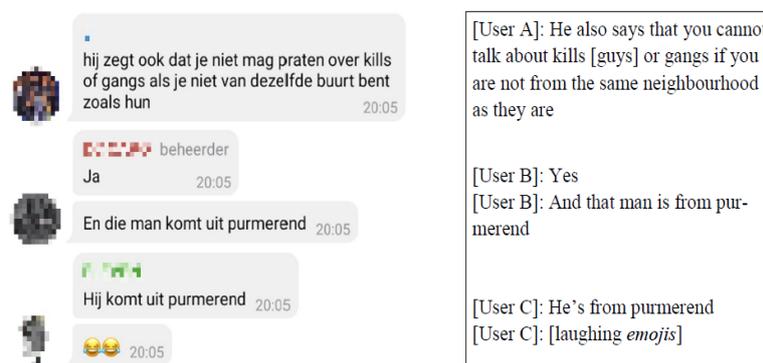


Figure 59.- Contradictory views on hierarchies within local status.
Translation: to the right

The unstable hierarchies of local status should be positioned in the wider nature of late modernity. Bauman (2000) referred to this nature in late modernity as ‘liquid’, being a metaphorical term for the difficulty of liquids to hold their shape. In the foreword of his work,

he uses this metaphor to describe that in late modern times “change is the only permanence, and uncertainty the only certainty”. Online drill consumers are continuously forced to deal with the uncertainties underpinning their localities. Whilst local status is of significant importance for the identities of youth in the drill subculture, their identities are becoming increasingly uncertain in liquid societies. Consequently, this liquidity causes ontological insecurities that are amplified by the plethora of different definitions of authentic localities. It is important for youth to be valued by their peers as they vie to attain a higher status in the field than others. However, the continuously changing subcultural definitions on what is authentic, and how this accordingly determines one’s status, solely provides uncertainty for their identities and statuses. As the subsequent paragraph will outline, these ontological uncertainties are not limited to the influence that locality has on their identities. The uncertainties intrude on different domains in the drill subculture, and should also be positioned in the wider street cultural tendency to be rife with contradictory views.

7.8. PARADOXICAL PROSUMPTION

“If he was a civilian then he tried to run and not to kick”

The social dynamics underpinning the vague definitional and spatial boundaries of local statuses resemble the dynamics of the ‘paradox of legitimacy’ described in chapter 3. Lauger (2012) coined this term to refer to individuals in the ‘intergang environment’ who attempt to construct social boundaries based on who is included in the ‘intergang field’. Due to the assessments of other peers within ‘intergang interactions’, everyone adheres to a different definition of what it means to be ‘real’. Consequently, there is no concrete, comprehensive and singular guideline or frame of reference to when someone is legitimately labelled as *real*. The same holds true for local capital and local status: there is no consensually negotiated agreement on which areas are legitimately labelled as ‘authentic’ and ‘real’. However, when perceived in the light of drill’s embeddedness in wider street culture, this is a sole manifestation of street culture as a “conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies” (Bourgois, 2003, p. 3).

To explicate, the vague field boundaries of what legitimately defines being ‘real’ are based on more than solely locality. For drillers, scoring ‘points’ by physically assaulting an opponent could symbolically validate their violent persona and accordingly enhance their authenticity. However, the definition amongst consumers on when a point is attained is rife with ambiguity.

Various definitions on ‘points’ clash with each other in a web of conflictual beliefs and symbols, providing no one with a comprehensive and singular idea of when drillers have scored a point. Accordingly, different scoreboards co-exist, not solely due to the unclarity of how many violent incidents were perpetrated by a driller or drill group, but also because of the plethora of different definitions on a ‘point’. The definition of a point could entail simply touching someone, letting someone run, shooting someone’s house, stabbing, shooting or, as the ‘ultimate point’, killing someone. For instance, figure 60 entails a discussion on whether hitting someone should be considered as worthy of a point. Even in the instance of murder, which could be perceived as the most unambiguous symbolic communication of violence (see Anderson, 1999), debates arise on whether certain murders are worthy of a point and if so, who gets the point. For instance, figure 61 shows that an online drill consumer is critical of a drill group that appropriates a point because an allied group killed someone. According to this person, an intergroup relationship should not be a fundamental base for the arrogation of points, whilst this drill group supposedly claims otherwise.



Figure 60.- [User A]: “Well, hitting someone is not a point”
[User B]: “Actually, it is”



Figure 61.- “How is it your point when you have linked with a gang that killed [person]”

Notwithstanding the influx of street cultural contradictoriness, the identity of the person that has been victimised is another element that produces ambiguity concerning the definition of a point. As discussed earlier, the term ‘civilian’ could refer to individuals outside the drill subculture. However, it is frequently debated whether points ascribed by physically assaulting civilians are legitimate points, or whether they should solely be centred around assaults towards drillers. Moreover, is not always clear what defines a ‘civilian’. The field boundaries of who is a civilian are similarly contested, consequently contributing to even more ambiguity towards the attribution of points. On the one side, under the mantra ‘*a friend of an opp is also an opp*’, the field boundaries of civilians exclude the social circle of an opponent. On the other side, consumers argue that civilians could also be friends of drillers as long as they are not engaged in *beefs*. As illustrated in figure 62, there is a disagreement on whether a civilian could be someone who engages in a fight or not. Furthermore, an online drill consumer in figure 63 argues that the criterium of what defines a driller should belong to whether someone is ‘street’

or not. These conversations illustrate the contradictory views and ambiguity towards defining someone as a ‘civilian’.

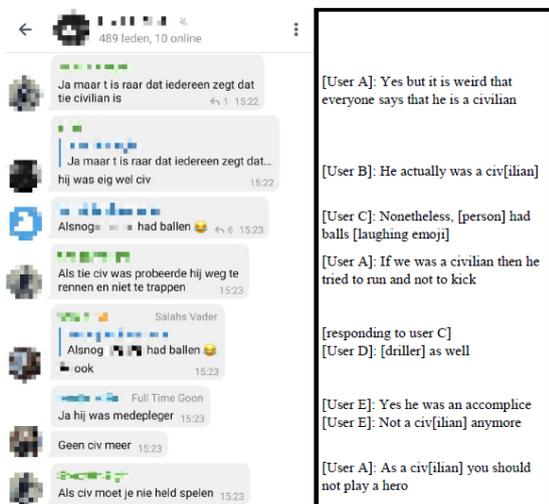


Figure 62.- Discussion on the definition of a civilian: translation to the right



Figure 63.- Discussion on the definition of a civilian: translation to the right

The contention of Anderson (1999) that violence could be used as an unambiguous means to communicate authenticity and a decisive winner or loser becomes contested in the light of these definitional uncertainties. Attaining a point should symbolically communicate that someone won a violent conflict, but as there is no clear guideline to when a point is legitimately earned, it loses its unambiguous symbolic meaning. Online drill consumers contribute to defining what activities deserve a point, who legitimately earns a point, who is the most violent and ultimately, who is the most authentic. In the light of the contemporary digital society, consumers are no passive internalisers of pre-fixed meanings anymore but actively engage in the construction of meanings as ‘prosumers’ (Yar, 2012). We see this happening amongst online drill consumers as well; they continuously negotiate the boundaries of what is deemed legitimate and who is deemed authentic. Therefore, they actively participate in constructing and redefining notions of legitimacy and authenticity amongst themselves and amongst drillers.

However, when the plethora of these negotiations on definitions and boundaries in networked publics conflates with a street culture that is already rife with contradictory views, this contradictoriness gets amplified. To support this argument, this phenomenon will be explained through a Durkheimian perspective on cultural diversity (see Durkheim, 1912). The extent to which a social group is isolated will limit the number of social interactions within a group. If the group is relatively small, similar cultural ideas will be produced when intragroup interactions are relatively high. Consequently, this will establish clear definitions and

boundaries with marginal disagreements. However, as diverse interactions with different individuals and groups possessing various beliefs, ideologies, norms, values and modes of conduct increase, the number of discordant contentions regarding definitions and boundaries similarly increases. The rise of the prosumer in a digital society is exemplary of this process, in which the superfluity of networked publics in the drill subculture and general street culture brings along a plethora of discordant views. Consequently, the contradictoriness of street culture is catalysed by the implications of numerous interactions between human beings in networked publics. Mediated images and views on street cultural definitions and meanings are continuously reconstructed and redefined. Subsequently, the digitalisation of street culture reinforces the blurring distinctions of fact and fiction; it becomes increasingly difficult to determine what and who is legitimately seen as authentic. The above-described phenomena of discordant beliefs and definitions of local status, points and civilians illustrate this.

The contradictory dynamics inherent in street culture could be interpreted as part of the liquid conditions in late modernity. Street culture is constantly subject to change, continuously evolving and never settling for a consensus on definitions and meanings. This makes street culture unstable, whilst individuals within the street culture are constantly trying to achieve stable identities and statuses. In the drill subculture, drillers and online drill consumers are continuously looking for meanings and definitions that will solve their ontological insecurities. However, the networked publics of drill communities cause them to deal with a superfluity of other meanings and definitions of individuals who also attempt to cope with ontological insecurities and create a certain status for themselves. The numerous ontological insecurities in street culture should therefore be interpreted as an implication of today's liquid society, in which digital technologies reinforce its liquidity.

7.9. CONTRADICTORY CONVERSATIONS

“He is the biggest midfielder of NL”

This thesis adheres to a slightly adapted definition of Bourgois' (2003) conceptualisation of street culture. To repeat, street culture is understood as “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in the opposition to [feelings of] exclusion from mainstream society” (p. 8). Besides the ambiguity on symbolic definitions and beliefs, the drill subculture is also rife with conflictual norms and mannerisms. Certain mannerisms are regularly in conflict with existing norms. This becomes

especially apparent in figure 64, where an online drill consumer recognises the contradiction between a driller's communicated norms and his expressions. As the driller supposedly want others to leave his deceased friend alone by not talking bad about him, this driller continues to talk about other victims of past violent incidents. Similarly, it is oftentimes suggested that people should leave families out of conflicts, whilst family members — especially mothers — are nevertheless regularly mentioned in conflicts, or even digitally or physically approached by drillers or consumers themselves. Both the conflictual norms concerning mentioning dead people and mentioning family are highlighted in figure 65, in which an online drill consumer confronts and criticises the expressions of someone else by comparing them to his or her own norms.

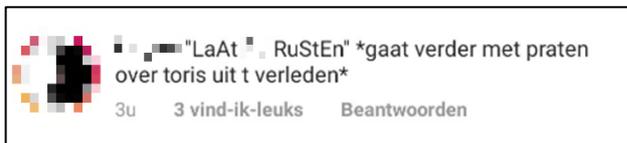


Figure 64.- ““Let [deceased friend] rest” *continues talking about past stories*”



Figure 65.- “Why would you talk anonymously about [driller] you don't even know that guy. And then you say milfpack [provocative term for 'dead mother'] because someone's mom is dead 🤔”

What is also manifested in figure 65 is what I define as the ‘involvement narrative’. This narrative is commonly used by online drill consumers to abhor online peers who are judging drillers who they supposedly do not know, or when they are choosing a side in conflicts between drillers when they are initially not involved in these conflicts. In other words, the involvement narrative entails the deprecation of consumers who judge drillers they do not personally know, and interfere in conflicts between drillers in which they were initially uninvolved. By using this narrative, online drill consumers are distinguishing their own lives and experiences from those of drillers. These two worlds should exist distinctly from each other and any efforts towards interwovenness between these two worlds are refuted.

The existence of double standards especially manifests itself when another narrative, being the ‘midfielder narrative’, is set off against the involvement narrative. Within the midfielder narrative, some online drill consumers repugnantly label drillers who refrain from conflicts with other drillers as ‘midfielders’. Here, figure 66 illustrates the detestation of an online drill consumer towards so-called midfielders by claiming that he is a ‘pussy’. When compared to the involvement narrative, these narratives are contradictory and imply double standard norms. A binary distinction is made between the worlds of drill consumers and drill producers. Thus, on

the one side, the involvement narrative entails the aversion amongst consumers towards other consumers who judge about drillers they do not know personally and involve in drill conflicts they are initially uninvolved in. On the other side, some consumers use the midfielder narrative to despise drillers who are not actively involved in running conflicts. Although not every individual in networked publics of drill necessarily adhere to both narratives simultaneously, the prevalent co-existence of them are exemplary of the wider contradictory nature of street culture and the drill subculture.

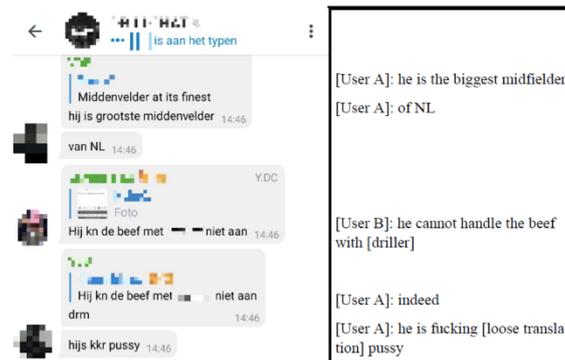


Figure 66.- Midfielder narrative. Translation: to the right.

In late modern times, insecurities wind their way around individuals; people attempt to construct securities by subjectively defining what is deemed legitimate according to their own beliefs. However, the abundance of discordant views contributes to the failure of establishing a consensually agreed upon ‘cultural toolkit’. There are multiple subjective definitions on which cultural toolkits ultimately define one’s ‘street capital’, which is defined as “the actor’s mastery of criminal activity and violence within a street culture prescribing particular values with its own rewards, gains, profits and sanctions” (Sandberg, 2008, p. 157). There is, however, a lack of consensual understanding of what these values, rewards, gains, profits and sanctions are. Consequently, the fundamentals of an inclusive street culture fade and multiple cultural toolkits co-exist that construct different interpretations of street capital. Indeed, as Martin (2004, p. 31) argues, today’s subcultures are “fluid, porous, amorphous and transitory”. The contested subcultural toolkit of the drill subculture and street culture implies how contemporary subcultures have become subject to late modern liquidity. As these subcultures continuously evolve, negotiate and redefine the norms, they are always in motion. The continuously changing symbolic meanings and definitions in the Amsterdam drill culture illustrate this.

7.10. REINFORCING REPUTATIONS BY REPRODUCING REPRESENTATIONS

“Now you are chinged in the park and you still did not ride 🤔😏”

The numerous social interactions enabled by networked publics do not solely reinforce the contradictory nature of street culture. They also contribute to the continuous reproduction and reexperience of past violent incidents. As online drill consumers discuss points, create scoreboard tallies, debate authenticities by drawing upon past incidents and redistribute footage of violent incidents, a single event could be continuously revisited and reexperienced. Fundamentally based on the persistence, replicability and scalability affordances of networked publics as described by boyd (2010, 2014), digital artefacts could perpetuate, multiply and virally spread within and throughout networked publics. According to Stuart (2020), this phenomenon could produce lasting and harmful reputations for drillers as they attain 'sticky reputations' which they could not get rid of. For drillers, sticky reputations could complicate the transformation towards a conventional lifestyle, even if the willingness for such a transformation exists.

For online drill consumers, the permanence of digital artefacts functions as a means to debate, confirm and refute the authenticity of drillers. The discussions on which drillers are the most authentic, the most criminal or the most violent are widely and permanently accessible for a wide audience to perceive. Before the prevalent use of new media in contemporary society, individuals had to regularly exert violence so they could "continuously reinforce the centrality of violence by advertising themselves as violent" (Lauger, 2012, p. 121). However, the impact of exerting violence was limited because it was momentary and solely witnessed by those who were present in time and space. Nowadays, networked publics allow for the consistent and continuous revisitation of singular events. Whilst violent reputations are constructed and enhanced through routine social interactions (Lauger, 2012), the number of social interactions is reinforced by networked publics. Digital and musical artefacts are increasingly used as a vehicle within social interactions to return to that one moment in time and in that one specific place where the exertion of violence occurred. Therefore, as full-fledged 'prosumers', online drill consumers contribute to the reproduction of violent reputations by, in a similar fashion as drill producers, constantly bringing up past incidents in debates around authenticity. As figure 67 shows, this could also include violent incidents from years ago. Accordingly, scoreboard tallies, news media articles, and other audio-visual footage are digitally visible, redistributed, examined and elaborately discussed amongst a wide audience of consumers. Therefore, drillers do not solely rely on their own continuous revisitation of violent incidents in music videos. They additionally rely on the efforts of consumers who also continuously revisit violent incidents within debates on authenticity. The traditional hierarchy between producers and

consumers has collapsed; consumers are now actively *prosuming* drillers' reputations. Consequently, drillers could feed on singular or few violent incidents to construct and uphold their violent reputation.



Figure 67.- Revisitation of violent incident. Translation: to the right

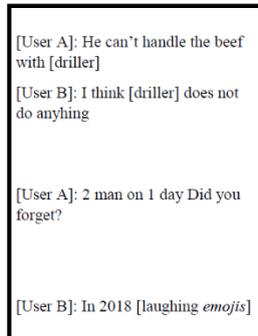


Figure 68.- "Getbackgang but no one rides [does anything]. Now you are chinged [stabbed] in the park and you still did not ride 🤔🤔"

The permanence of digital artefacts can also be used as a means to challenge or degrade a violent reputation. Figure 68 shows a consumer reciting a *line* from a driller who provocatively refers to the lack of retaliation from his 'opps'. The consumer laughingly responds to the line of this driller by stating that he has been stabbed after the release of this music video. This comment resembles the technique of 'cross-referencing', where someone highlights inconsistencies of another person's performance by comparing it with past content so they could degrade his or her authenticity (Stuart, 2019, p. 198). When an event has happened that does not match their past portrayed performance, consumers might pick up on this contradiction. The asynchronous ability in networked publics to respond to expressions communicated in the past allows online drill consumers to ridicule drillers as they have failed to uphold their performance. This produces a 'context collapse', in which the context of their online constructed persona is refuted by counter-evidence (Stuart, 2020, pp. 79-80). Thus, on the one hand, the authenticity and violent reputations of drillers can be enhanced by continuously bringing up past events according to the permanence of digital content. On the other hand, the authenticity of performances can also be challenged by bringing up past content and comparing this with current performances. Hence, the reputations of drillers heavily rely on the 'persistence' of digital artefacts and how online drill consumers accordingly interact with this affordance.

7.11. CONCLUSION

The present chapter aimed to answer the following subquestion: "How do consumers interpret and use the symbols of Amsterdam drill in online social interaction?". Online drill consumers

interpret the symbols of Amsterdam drill as a commodified representation of resistance. In their assessments of the musical symbols, drill has to consist of uncensored rawness, disrespect, rudeness and violence. However, the assessments on the identities of drillers prevail over the musical quality. Drillers have to portray an authentic performance *at all times*, and moments that contradict these performances are immediately highlighted by online drill consumers to challenge their authenticities. Hence, drillers have to take up the role of the ‘resisting rapper’ by displaying deviant and criminal behaviour, whether fictional or actual, whilst commodifying this role so it could be perceived as an authentic persona by a wide consumer audience. Drawing upon Presdee’s (2000) notion on ‘second lives’, the successful convincement of an authentically deviant self will cause online drill consumers to fulfil suppressed desires through the illicit pleasure of consuming this performance. They do this ephemerally and safely from behind their digital screens, in a process that Stuart (2020) calls ‘digital slumming’. This illuminates the intertwinements of the drill subculture with mainstream society. Contrary to some beliefs, the deviant behaviour in drill is not because they lack culture or because of a culture that is entirely alienated by conventional society (cf. Nightingale, 1993). It is actually a product of the overly economically organised world, in which the commodification of drill matches the suppressed desires of mainstream society (cf. Presdee, 2000). These desires emerge in opposition to the dull routine of everyday life and entail the illicit pleasures of consuming content depicting behaviour that conventional society considers deviant (Presdee, 2000). It provides carnivalesque excitement to consume deviant behaviour, making drill a commodified product of the suppressed mainstream desires.

But online drill consumers can take it one step further than solely consuming deviant content through ‘digital slumming’; they might also *use* the symbols by *participating* in deviant behaviour. Taking up the role of ‘prosumers’, online drill consumers co-commodify the productions and co-construct the reputations of drillers. By using the same symbols and mannerisms, they also actively participate in portraying deviant behaviour that is inherent in the drill subculture. Consequently, they aim to satisfy their illicit pleasures even more, as the Internet provides them with the ability to actively *live* their deviant second lives in the drill subculture. They continuously construct symbolic meanings for their own behaviour and the behaviour of others through online social interactions. This is eventually a quest towards an authentic self that is consequential of the unstable and liquid society where ontological insecurities thrive. The meanings ascribed to the use of symbols are always in motion and continuously changing. The plethora of different and contradictory meanings, amplified by the

increasing number of interactions through digital technologies, will provide even more insecurities and ambiguity. Ultimately, there will be no concrete and consensual understanding of what is deemed legitimate and authentic, causing youth to strive for an authentic self that will be immediately questioned through all the other definitions and meanings. This is the paradox that underlies the use of symbols in Amsterdam drill. The more online drill consumers attempt to provide meaning to their deviant behaviour so they could securitise ontological insecurities and satisfy suppressed desires of illicit pleasure, the less they will succeed.

CHAPTER 8 | CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this thesis has been to fathom the Amsterdam drill subculture. Drill remains a miscomprehended music genre and subculture that arouses widespread social concerns in the Netherlands. Therefore, the phenomenon strongly requires understanding and nuance into its meanings and dynamics. As a music genre in which the symbolic external appearances heavily rely on local contexts, the absence of academic literature on Amsterdam drill as one of the largest — if not the largest — Dutch drill scenes is tackled by exploring the symbols amongst its producers and online consumers. Hence, the research question of concern within the present thesis has been: “*How can the symbolic use of Amsterdam drill rap by its producers and online consumers be explained through a cultural and digital criminological perspective?*”. The core of the conclusion is twofold. First, the research question is answered by drawing upon the results of the present study. Second, the contributions of the study to scientific debates on drill and wider street culture will be discussed. The subsequent recommendation chapter will position this study in practical and social debates.

8.1. THE SYMBOLS OF AMSTERDAM DRILL IN LATE MODERNITY

This thesis has first attempted to identify the symbols of Amsterdam drill rap and discover their meanings. The backdrop of drill rap is rooted in traditional gang culture and gangsta rap, which has had a significant influence on its symbols. Most youths in late modern societies are obsessed with the styles, fashions, imagery and symbols of gangsta rap and use them as a means for constructing an identity (Brotherton, 2008). In this late modern process, “the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street” (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 259). However, through the process of deterritorialisation, the symbolic meanings of gangster rap are transformed into newer meanings in Amsterdam drill rap. Consequently, the symbols of gangsta rap conflate with late modernity, urban poverty and a digital society. The images of drill have become increasingly mediated via digital technologies, in which the symbols and mannerisms could be perceived as *simulacra* of traditional gang culture. Although this does not mean that drillers are gang members and drill groups are gangs, the audio and visual symbols in Amsterdam drill production are nevertheless predominantly centred around the notion of violent criminality as a way to *represent* resistance towards conventional society.

The omnipresent representations of resistant attitudes amongst Amsterdam drillers are usually grounded in the disadvantaged conditions of the neighbourhoods they represent. These are areas

that have been generally labelled by conventional society as ‘bad neighbourhoods’. Drill music is a reflection of resisting conventional society by, paradoxically, accentuating and embracing the label that conventional society and the state put on the neighbourhoods and their residents. Amsterdam drillers symbolise this by using micro-narratives, mantras and inscriptions in which they oppose law enforcement agencies; flaunt weapons; deem oneself and the neighbourhood as dangerous; portray dance moves hinting at violence; brag about their mastery of violent criminality; and wear fashion attributes that symbolise a deviant, criminal and violent persona.

To invigorate the performances that are based on resistance towards conventional society, Amsterdam drillers want to show that they are not only from the streets, but also *belong* on the streets. Showing and telling that one lives a street life simultaneously implies that one does not abide by the rules of conventional society. To support this performance, drillers have to look and sound tough to attain respect and a certain status within the drill subculture and wider street culture (cf. Anderson, 1999). Performing a hypermasculine persona helps them to do so, in which women get sexually objectified, they express loyalty to their friends from the neighbourhood and they conspicuously show and tell their excessive consumption practices. Portraying oneself as such is considered ‘street cool’ and symbolises a certain degree of nonchalance and resistance towards the norms of mainstream society. Whilst resisting and excluding oneself from conventional society, Amsterdam drillers refer to themselves as ‘devilish’ and repugnantly label individuals within conventional society as ‘civilians’. Hence, the more they resist conventional society by accentuating their exclusion from it, the more they include themselves in the drill subculture and wider street culture. In late modern times, the world has become bulimic as society simultaneously absorbs and ejects masses of people. Drill is an archetype of this phenomenon, where promoting oneself as a deviant and excluded persona increasingly leads to subcultural inclusion.

Besides portraying a deviant performance to belong to a subculture, Amsterdam drillers see entrepreneurial opportunities in performing resistant behaviour through drill music. They commodify an artistic persona that is centred around resistance, violence and criminality. Positioned in the wider developments of late modern societies, the commodification of drill should be interpreted as a part of the wider “commodification of violence and the marketing of transgression” (Ferrell et al., 2015, p. 164). With youth being attracted to the symbols of gangster culture, whilst also longing for rude, disrespectful and violent symbols, drillers attempt to fulfil the desires of late modern consumer societies. It also pressures them to continuously produce digital and musical content, which could stimulate them to stick to the symbols that

have proven commercial value — in this case, symbols focused on violence and knives. Ultimately, the excluded persona has become a street cool and marketable identity that is used to satisfy contemporary consumer economies. Online drill consumers yearn to see productions that symbolise uncensored rawness, and drillers who symbolise lives of violent criminality on the streets. This illuminates the symbiotic relationship between drill producers and consumers, in which both parties benefit from each other.

However, Amsterdam drillers are not the only actors who are contributing to the commodification of manifest symbols and symbolic personas. Videographers and instrumental producers support the construction of a violent persona amongst drillers. They are accentuating the most distressing symbols related to drillers' identities for commercial value, feeding into the consumerist demand towards violence and crime. The symbols are also appropriated by mainstream actors and are subsequently transformed to fit new, ostensibly more 'innocent', contexts. The meanings ascribed to the images are therefore continuously redefined and reconstructed by the actors involved in the process of commodification. Thus, drillers, mainstream artists, videographers and instrumental producers cause these images to spiral away towards newer meanings through the process of commodification. Ultimately, the Amsterdam drill phenomenon is positioned inside of a hall of mirrors.

Inside the hall of mirrors, the distinction between actuality and virtuality fades. During this process, drillers want to convince others that what they are rapping about are facts. They do this by confirming the authenticity of their branded persona and suggest that there is no distinction between fact and fiction within their musical expressions. Hence, they vie to be the most authentic driller, whilst degrading the authenticity of other drillers by insulting and threatening them through micro-narratives and inscriptions. However, we must not perceive the artistic persona as indistinguishable from the person who manufactures it. In other words, we must not take the symbols of Amsterdam drill rap literally as this would be, in the words of Ilan (2020), 'street illiterate'. The violent symbols that constitute a driller's identity are inspired by gangster culture, creating a hyperreality through the mediation and reconstruction of mediated images (cf. Roks, 2020). Consequently, violent drill conflicts could be interpreted as commodified simulacra of traditional gang conflicts. However, this does not mean that drillers are gang members and that drill groups are gangs. Drillers perform a violent and deviant identity that resembles gang imagery because late modern youth are attracted to the styles and symbols of it. In other words, performing an image of self — or rather an image of one's commodified

artistic self — that portrays deviant, violent and resistant behaviour matches the desires in late modern and digital consumption economies.

Online drill consumers generally assess the music videos based on the degree of uncensored rawness, disrespect and violence. They perceive drill as a commodified representation of resistance that is consumed to temporarily experience a carnivalesque excitement of danger. In the words of Presdee (2000), online drill consumers approach drill music videos so they could safely consume content displaying deviant and resistant behaviour, consequently fulfilling the suppressed pleasures in their cathartic ‘second lives’. This simultaneously explains why drillers are attempting to perform a deviant persona. The violent personas of drillers are instrumentally used to meet these late modern consumer desires. The drill subculture is, therefore, not lacking, or alienated from, mainstream culture but actually interwoven with it. The symbols are responses to suppressed desires in late modern society, allowing individuals to experience illicit pleasures through the consumption of behaviour that conventional society considers deviant. The bulimic conditions of late modernity, in which inclusion concurs with exclusion, become apparent in the light of this interwovenness. The commodification of violence causes the consumption of content depicting deviant behaviour to be an integral part of mainstream culture. The commodification of drill illustrates this dynamic, transforming the representation of a resisting and excluded persona into a personified form of entertainment in mainstream consumer economies.

To experience an even more intense state of catharsis, online drill consumers also participate in digitally portraying deviant behaviour in their second lives. By approaching the Internet, they use similar symbols and mannerisms as drillers to construct an identity. The unstable and constantly changing developments of late modernity produce ontological insecurities in which individuals attempt to give meaning to their identities. Online drill consumers also attempt to create an authentic self by ascribing meanings to the symbols of the drill subculture. However, as digital technologies increase the number of social interactions between heterogeneous individuals from different localities, contradictory views on what legitimately defines an authentic self co-exist. Consequently, the drill subculture is rife with contradictory beliefs, norms, values, expressions and modes of conduct. The plethora of contradictions in networked publics will eventually lead to a vain quest of securitising ontological insecurity. Paradoxically, consumers attempt to solve their insecurities by ascribing meanings to the norms and symbols of the drill subculture, whilst being constantly questioned by other consumers ascribing

contradictory meanings. Ultimately, both drillers and online drill consumers use symbols that vainly aim to convince others of their authenticity.

The discussions on the authenticity of drillers' personas additionally connect the production and consumption of Amsterdam drill. As they discuss the authenticity of drillers to a far greater extent than responding or discussing the manifest music symbols, drill has become 'identity art'. Here, the assessments of drillers' identities are more significant than the quality of the music videos. The debates concerning drillers' authenticities attract online drill consumers as it entertains them throughout their everyday lives. The title of this thesis, *'Favourite rappers or favourite cappers?'*, with the latter term meaning 'lying people', encompasses this ubiquitous quest for consumers to label drillers as *fake* or *real*. This shows that the role of music consumers has increasingly become important for the producers. In the contemporary digital society, namely, the producers of Amsterdam drill music are not the only actors ascribing meanings to these symbols. The affordances of digital technologies cause the traditional roles of producers who solely produce content, and consumers who only passively internalise content, to collapse. Now, consumers are actively engaged in producing digital content, symbols and meanings as they take up the role of 'prosumers' (Yar, 2012). Consequently, online drill consumers are co-constructing the reputations of drillers as they constantly discuss their authenticity by referring to past violent incidents. In a digital society, it is not essential anymore to uphold violent reputations by consistently exerting violence in front of a physical audience that witnesses this act momentarily. Nowadays, drillers can rely on online drill consumers to consistently reproduce one or a few incidents that could have happened a relatively long time ago.

So, in conclusion, the last two paragraphs will provide a brief, yet full, answer to the following research question: *"How can the symbolic use of Amsterdam drill rap by its producers and online consumers be explained through a cultural and digital criminological perspective?"*. Born out of resistant attitudes, the symbols of Amsterdam drill should be perceived as commodified representations of resistance. The symbiotic relationship between the producers and consumers of Amsterdam drill symbols relies on their joint efforts to construct, appropriate and commodify deviant reputations. Youth strive to perform a resisting, deviant and criminal identity as it is 'street cool' to be excluded from conventional society. Social media function as a stage and a vehicle to do so, whilst being catalysed by late modern consumption economies. Here, we want to consume each other as consumer commodities, but also want to consume deviant content. The conflation of these two desires within contemporary consumer societies are what defines the commodified success of drill. As a representation of social exclusion and

deviancy, drill provides a carnivalesque excitement by consuming, and participating in, the drill subculture through the use of symbols. Hence, drill is intertwined with mainstream culture in a way that it satisfies the suppressed desires for illicit pleasures emerging from the overly economically organised late modern world (cf. Nightingale, 1993; Presdee, 2000).

Hence, drill should be positioned in a late modern time where ontological insecurities conflate with the desire to consume and participate in resistant and deviant behaviour, whilst being facilitated by the relative ease of constructing a mediated self online. As the mediated images of drill are bouncing one off the other in a hall of mirrors, it blurs the distinction between fact and fiction. Although this makes it difficult to recognise what is real and fiction, we should not succumb to ‘street illiteracy’ and perceive drill symbols as the literal truth based on actual images. But we should pay attention. This thesis has shown us that digital technologies enable drill producers and online consumers to creatively and uniquely use subcultural symbols to tell us a lot. There are reasons why youth in the drill subculture are doing this. Now, it is our job to understand them. We should listen *and* watch.

8.2. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

In this last subchapter, I will briefly position the present study in scientific debates on drill and the wider street culture. Despite widespread social concerns, this study has contributed to the marginal body of academic inquiry on Dutch drill rap. It has shown that a thorough understanding of the symbols is necessitated in order to understand the subculture and those who are affiliated with it. Therefore, this study adds to the scholarly works in UK drill, where academics deprecate, but also warn for, the criminalisation of the music genre due to street illiterate readings of the subculture (see Fatsis, 2019; Ilan, 2020). Despite some brief explanations on the terminologies and symbols of UK drill (Ilan, 2020) and Rotterdam drill (Roks & van den Broek, 2020), a comprehensive and detailed description of the manifest symbols in drill music videos remained, up until this study, unpractised. Furthermore, audio and visual interventions are often ignored in criminological inquiry on rap music. This thesis shed light on how videographers and instrumental producers are co-constructing the symbols and personas of drillers. This additionally offers better insights into the commodified processes and the role of the actors involved in the production of drill music. Moreover, the present thesis is unique in studying the online drill consumers and their interpretation and use of drill symbols. Studying both the production and consumption side of overly commodified phenomena will gain more insights into the meanings ascribed to symbols and styles, the symbolic dynamics of

commodification processes and how supply and demand meet each other. Ergo, in the context of the present study, the triangulation of both methods offered a fruitful apprehension of the dynamics underlying drill's commodification and its inherent styles and symbols. Thus, this thesis could, at least for the Amsterdam drill scene, be perceived as a guideline for educating any interested party to become more street literate in the drill subculture.

The approach to study the drill subculture within this thesis has been supported by a cultural criminological and digital criminological framework. The deployment of these theories and concepts supported the analysis of this study by positioning the local phenomenon in a wider, global context. It contributes to perceiving drill within a 'criminology of now', acknowledging the influx of wider macro processes, dynamics, styles and symbols of subcultures and the implications of a late modern digital society. As an overly commodified representation of resistance towards conventional society, hip hop, but especially drill, should be perceived as a product of late modern developments. Hence, the cultural criminological enterprise is best suited to study drill. In doing so, this study has utilised a mixed-methods approach to study a cultural criminological phenomenon. This contributes to Hayward's (2016) contention that cultural criminology should be invested in "breaking down existing barriers between quantitative and qualitative methodology" (p. 309). The results of quantitative content analysis were integrated with both a qualitative interpretation of the symbols and a netnographic method to discover the meanings, use and interpretation of symbols in Amsterdam drill. Although cultural criminologists are vocal regarding their advocacy for qualitative research methods to discover phenomena in the cultural criminological realm, they should not exclude the methodological benefits of quantitative research methods. Dependent on the research design, quantitative analyses could enrich the qualitative approach in multiple ways, and vice-versa. This thesis has provided an example of these benefits.

As posited in the prior subchapter, drill rap should be perceived as a late modern product in which the commodification of violence, ontological insecurities, resistance towards conventional society and the intrusion of digital technologies into our everyday lives are conflated. By positioning the present research theme in a digital criminological framework, it provided insights into the interactions of human beings with digital technologies and how this shapes online behaviour. It, therefore, helped to acknowledge this hybrid relationship in a *technosocial* sphere and apply this to the methodological design. The digital criminological enterprise helped me, as a researcher, to understand the influences and infrastructures of the digital research locations. The online and publicly perceivable nature of drill has provided

relatively easy access to interactions within the drill subculture. In a similar fashion as the present study, online methods are an adequate approach to fathom the styles and manifest symbols of mediated performances; it does not limit itself to drill rap. Subcultures that are relatively difficult to access because of their resistant attitudes towards conventional society and distrust towards official institutions, such as the wider street culture, are increasingly situated online. This additionally creates numerous methodological benefits for researchers to study the social interactions and mediated performances of communities that are traditionally difficult to access. For instance, a non-participant stance reduces socially desired expressions due to the presence of the researcher and it enables the researcher to *always* be there in space and time. For practical professionals in the field, being online could also be a way of approaching youth and following trends in subcultures. Hence, the next chapter will embark on the recommendations for professionals and accordingly provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 9 | RECOMMENDATIONS

Because this thesis is conducted as a part of an internship at *Actiecentrum Veiligheid en Zorg*, this chapter will first provide recommendations for professionals based on the findings of this study. Besides the first five recommendations that focus on explicitly the drill phenomenon, the last three recommendations are more generally focused on engagement with youth. This is because this thesis has attempted to perceive the drill subculture as an integral part of the wider street- and youth culture. Furthermore, at the end of the chapter, potential subjects for future research are discussed based on the insights and remaining knowledge gaps resulting from this thesis.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS

1. Understand the symbols by closely listening *and* watching

This thesis has shown that drill music is about more than audio; the visual elements are just as important. Contextual knowledge regarding the audio and visual symbols, but also the developments in the wider drill scene, are vital in comprehending what drillers — and their support personnel — attempt to communicate. The process takes time and determination but once the rewards are reaped, one could not solely understand the musical communication but also the wider expressions and subcultural norms. During professional supervision and the potential formation of interventions for youth in the drill subculture, drill should be perceived as a personal domain in their lives. If professionals want to understand youth, they should be interested and motivated in trying to understand drill. This thesis can be used as an initiator and a frame of reference in achieving this.

2. Once understood, do not always perceive symbols as the literal truth

The symbols of Amsterdam drill production are part of a wider performance, usually towards a violent or criminal identity. This does not imply that these individuals are necessarily violent or criminal themselves. Drill production can be used as a means to attract attention or acknowledgement from a wide digital audience and has become a commodity that is exploited to gain financial profits. Even if one understands the meanings of the symbols, it is important to also understand the use of them by not perceiving them as the literal truth. We should, however, take them seriously; drillers are telling and showing us a lot and we should attentively listen and watch. The crux in interventions that are based on music videos is to distinguish

‘macho’ behaviour from illegal activities, such as the portrayal of weapons without a permit (cf. Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 138-139).

3. Avoid confirming and co-constructing violent or criminal reputations

This thesis has shown that consumers are actively involved in the construction of criminal or violent reputations amongst drillers, partly by discussing their respective authenticity. Official institutions and media outlets should be wary to not actively contribute to these reputations. Similarly, stigmatising the neighbourhood by applying a ‘dangerous’ label also feeds into the image drillers perform due to the importance of locality in their individual and group identities (cf. Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 134-135). Confirming or even supporting the construction of these performances could have undesired implications, such as the attainment of ‘sticky reputations’ through the permanence of digital content. The ‘right to be forgotten’ implemented by the GDPR in the European Union could be used as a tool in guiding youth who want to get rid of such reputations. Moreover, feeding into the reputation that drillers attempt to construct could increase the likelihood of other drillers to challenge one’s reputation in order to gain more attention — or *clout* — themselves. In line with this contention, this thesis has refrained from using the term ‘gang’ as it puts a negative and oftentimes racialised label on drillers. I strongly urge professionals to do the same when talking about drillers and drill groups. Even though some drillers claim otherwise, drillers are *no* gang members and drill groups are *no* gangs. Labelling them as such feeds into the reputation they (falsely) attempt to construct.

4. Stay up-to-date by closely monitoring the drill scene

The fact that drill is predominantly situated online makes it easier to track the developments of local drill scenes, such as the Amsterdam scene, and the wider drill subculture. Because neither are static but rather continuously evolving, it is crucial to closely monitor developments online so professionals could act quickly according to accurate and current knowledge. Because drill groups, memberships and intergroup feuds are subject to change over time, the Amsterdam drill map at the end of the thesis could be consulted and used as a frame of reference that helps to initially understand the Amsterdam scene. Moreover, online monitoring helps in picking up early signals of online performances that could have undesired or dangerous implications (cf. Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 135). For instance, being sincerely interested in a certain driller who is supervised by a professional also necessitates the professional to track his music productions. Hence, signalling symbols that might be worrying, such as the portrayal of weapons, could aid professionals in intervening quickly before these performances might come

back to haunt them. Similarly, if a professional observes that performances are moving away from their violent and dangerous image, he or she could take additional efforts to guide this individual in stepping away from this image.

5. Consider support personnel as gatekeepers for rapprochement

If professionals are legitimately worried about the online performance of a driller and want to explore ways for rapprochement, support personnel could be an efficient entrance. As discussed, drillers heavily rely on the efforts of support personnel to co-construct a certain violent or criminal image. Besides the videographers and instrumental producers discussed in this thesis, support personnel could consist of more types of actors such as record labels, songwriters and managers. Drillers might have close social relationships with them or perceive them as authoritative role models. If interventions are desired because of concerns amongst professionals, support personnel could therefore serve as efficient intermediaries. However, this does not have to serve as the only or best way to approach drillers. Seeking direct contact with drillers can sometimes function as the best way to approach them; this is dependent on the specific case. Nonetheless, the possibility to approach support personnel should be considered as an available option.

6. Stress contradictions to initiate critical reflections

Chapter 7 has elucidated the contradictoriness of the drill subculture and wider street culture, which is being amplified by digitalised networks. If desired, professionals can stress the contradictory views for youth to critically reflect on what they perceive as authentic, legitimate and status-enhancing. Central in this reflection should be a critical reflection on the distinction, or sometimes fading distinction, between reality and performances. ‘Filter bubbles’ could reinforce the view amongst youth that what they perceive online is the only reality (cf. Roks & van den Broek, 2020, p. 137). By highlighting the contradictory views that already exist within the subculture(s) they belong to, professionals could — once again, if desired — initiate youth to critically reflect on their perceived reality. Just as we should not perceive everything as the literal truth, professionals could invigorate resilience amongst youth to do the same by stressing contradictory views.

7. Be aware of the local environment

Drill is interwoven with the representation and antagonisation of localities. However, this does not limit itself to drillers; the local environment functions as an important element in the

construction of identities amongst youth in general. The drill subculture could be seen as an archetype of this phenomenon, where stigmatised reputations of localities enhance the status of someone who represents this area. The representations of resistant attitudes and performances amongst drillers are rooted in the local dynamics of their neighbourhoods and form a central symbolic element in their music production. Therefore, to take a more general youth-oriented perspective, it is not solely vital to know which neighbourhood someone resides or represents, but also to *understand* this neighbourhood (cf. Roks & van den Broek, 2020, pp. 133-134).

8. Consider your own personal background when approaching youth

Besides taking someone else's locality into account, it is also wise to consider your own locality when approaching youth. Chapter 7 has shown that the assessments of peers amongst online drill consumers heavily relies on one's authenticity and locality. When approaching youth and attempting to build trust, it could be wise to reflect on your own locality and knowledge of it to explore potential similarities. However, it is important to not overexaggerate this and definitely not lie — or *cap*. Giving the impression that your behaviour is *real*, and therefore authentic, serves as the fundament of trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Following the results of this study, a few knowledge gaps are remaining and some interesting insights could be explored further. Hence, this section will provide four points of recommendations for potential future research on the drill phenomenon. First, the research design is constructed in a way that attempts to deploy a *verstehen* approach without actively approaching the research subjects themselves. Although this non-participant stance creates a couple of benefits, methodological triangulation with participating methods could be fruitful in future research that attempts to illuminate the motivations for communicating certain symbols in the drill subculture(s). In line with Lane's (2016) contention that the "best ethnographic research is done at the intersection of both [traditional ethnography and netnography]" (p. 5) the present thesis could serve as a fundament to a follow-up ethnographic study on drill production or consumption.

Second, future research could further explore the reasons for local differences throughout the Amsterdam drill scene. This thesis has noted that various city districts and neighbourhoods consist of different symbolic themes and aesthetics. Taking the process of deterritorialisation inherent in the various local drill scenes into account, these differences are likely derived from

the local contexts of the neighbourhoods that drillers represent. The underlying local dynamics could not be entirely identified because the present thesis lacks ethnographic or specific local data. Following up on the prior recommendation, a more participant stance towards drill production could complement this knowledge gap.

Third, future research should not necessarily limit its focus on drill producers or consumers but could focus on the motivations and role of the ‘support personnel’ as well. This study has solely studied the role of videographers and instrumental producers as support personnel because their efforts could be manifestly seen and heard through music videos. More actors contribute to the production and recommodification of drill, such as record labels, potential lyric writers and perhaps more, yet unidentified, actors. Stuart (2020) notes that support personnel cause drillers to make the least money off of their own musical products due to a skewed reward structure underpinning the production of drill. It could be explored whether this is also the case in the Dutch drill scene and, if so, how this relates to the production and consumption practices of the music genre. Hence, future research could focus on the ‘invisible world’ underlying the music productions.

Fourth, the quantitative data and research design pertaining to the content analysis of music videos are well suited to be applied to other types of research designs. The process of deterritorialisation discussed in chapter 2, in which local drill scenes could differ from each other on different analytical and spatial levels, could be further analysed on an urban meso level and national macro level by using the same research instrument. The coding list of this thesis could be consulted to analyse drill from other cities or countries and accordingly incorporate this data in the database from this study. Consequently, comparative analyses between different territories and more general claims on the dynamics underpinning the symbols could be made. Such a study could simultaneously enhance the external validity of the claims in the present thesis. Furthermore, the extent to which certain symbols or symbolic themes are communicated could be complemented with police data. Potentially interesting and practically useful insights could be derived from such a study, in which the supposed drill-crime nexus could be explored. It is, nonetheless, crucial that a study of this kind refrains from initially criminalising drillers and, therefore, this study should consider these symbols as part of artistic performances. Thus, the quantitative database lends itself easily applicable to other types of data and is therefore also flexible to be used in other, yet undiscussed, research designs.

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- 9) #LSG Biggskaki – Lightwork Freestyle NL | Pressplay (25 May 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4y1QGurRKE> Analysed 5 April 2021 and 6 April 2021.
- 10) #LS LelyLand Spartans (Biggskaki, Stille57, JamaLSG, Splashy, Khada & Trouble) – Concrete Barz #74 (19 November 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsspgMVVdWU>. Analysed 5 April 2021 and 6 April 2021.
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- 12) BIGGS KAKI - INTENSIVE CARE FT. JORRA (Prod. by RDVDTF) (Official Video) (31 July 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6OFKIFTxTs>. Analysed 5 April 2021 and 6 April 2021.
- 13) BiggsKaki X BerryVHW Jnoen Hele Clip (6 January 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0HG6w_OiLk. Analysed 5 April 2021 and 6 April 2021.
- 14) Biggskaki x Khadabigfish – Money Maken (Prod. ally808) | #HxD (2 Oktober 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Anmk1-uF5k>. Analysed 5 April 2021 and 6 April 2021.
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- 2) SANDROGOGETTER - #PLANKTON (prod. by Franco III) (22 Oktober 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggt8bmac-PA>. Analysed 7 April 2021.

- 3) GOGETTER - #AMSTERDRILL (21 May 2019) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kX5Ce47RYyw>. Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 4) #EDG LB x Ena x KV Savage x RR (ft. #CB GOGETTER) - 2 voor een 5 prod by. Jbeatz (Official Video) (13 December 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HLs1FSTd-g>. Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 5) #Z13 Ghost13 x (CB) GOGETTER – IK KOM (Prod. Yamaica) (5 July 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ANKP_LNeH4. Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 6) GOGETTER – CilinderSessie | Concrete Barz #2 (7 March 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=fesGgiUVJ8E&ab_channel=SPTVNL. Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 7) GOGETTER – BART SIMPSON (Prod. LuiSantana) (25 February 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJTV8U-HVKg> Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 8) #CB GOGETTER X ML – Lightwork Freestyle NL (Prod. Robin) | Pressplay (6 February 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXmxnwCLpQY> Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 9) GOGETTER – Anthem #CB (Prod. FS) (29 March 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIJO6U2XWcU>. Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 10) #CB #TF ML – Lightwork Freestyle NL (Prod. DcE) | Pressplay (31 August 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP6M2RuhHKg> Analysed 7 April 2021.
- 11) GOGETTER – TIPS (5 November 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1HxmA-kVpo>. Analysed 7 April 2021.

1102 Entertainment

- 1) RYT GW14 x Firra Haze - Violent Talk (Music Video) (Prod. Sjbeats) | Pressplay (2 December 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ns2P8Rw3F4>. Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 2) #RYT #7.62 GW14 x Firra Haze - Lightwork Freestyle NL (Prod. RubinBeats & TM) | Pressplay (22 February 2021). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNgkD_-48uw&t=29s. Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 3) Firra Haze – Geef Der Niets (Prod. by SHXKKA) (14 November 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYtq--pMP6g>. Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 4) Firra Haze – Wie Zoekt Die Vind ft V2&Yxngvoss (prod. by Eliandro) (24 February 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gnh5uthtVF8> Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 5) Firra haze – Heaven ft. Tano S (Prod by parker) (20 July 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7HPcrmRXWo> Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 6) Firra Haze - Back2Back ft. V2 Andere Versi (prod by Shxkka) (2 Oktober 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwqb2d8fovI> Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 7) Firra haze x YxngVoss – Hij wilt het niet (Prod by Eliandro) (28 December 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U52qgoAGIPw> Analysed 8 April 2021.
- 8) Yxngvoss x RM - (Dutch/Dominican Drill) | #HxD (4 December 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5IGzZy2AG8>. Analysed 8 April 2021.

KBC

- 1) Meokidd - Vespa sprint Ft. KBC (Klepperr, Bailey & Millions) (prod.Lauwii) (4 September 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPAoqB4ISGI>. Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 2) #KBC Bailey - Lightwork Freestyle NL (Prod. Rxckson x Rash x Robin) | Pressplay (5 Oktober 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5DxnnjZGHc&t=73s> Analysed 9 April 2021.

- 3) Quatro Vision, KBC (Bailey, C3, Millions, Klepper) & MeoKidd - Rijbewijs (Prod. JayM & RJ) (1 April 2021). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJE_hbjRFZw. Analysed 9 April 2021.

FGN

- 1) #DUTCHDRILL. YFB - DAMAGE. (PROD BY YARR) (31 January 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uu70QUo1N2c>. Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 2) #DUTCHDRILL. YFB - LIKE. FT ValutaC. (PROD YARR) (28 February 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2PVTsvEvXw>. Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 3) #DUTCHDRILL. ValutaC - Explanation. (PROD BY YARR.) (27 March 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT21AXW8Fzk> Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 4) #DUTCHDRILL. YFB - HEAVY. (PROD BY QUINTEN) (17 April 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwGedC3j958>. Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 5) YFB - F.A.C.T.S (Prod By YARR.) (31 July 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zun7JwR1qeo&ab_channel=FGNationnOfficial. Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 6) ValutaC – Dangerous 1.0 (Prod By YARR) (31 July 2020) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdHuHrt6_Z8&ab_channel=FGNationnOfficial. Analysed 9 April 2021.
- 7) ValutaC – No Mercy (Prod by Struisbeats) (29 January 2021). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lssnMbX0ki8&ab_channel=FGNationnOfficial. Analysed 9 April 2021.

5713

- 1) Dv – 5713 (PROD BY. TONIC) (22 March 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VadVc5nrs_4&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 11 April 2021.
- 2) Dv – VAN VLIET (PROD. BY JBEATZ) (RAW) (20 August 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7QYFYZejXg&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 11 April 2021.
- 3) Taylorr x Hmizo – Architect (Prod. Jbeatz) (4 February 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfry38SWRFw&ab_channel=taytjebandz. Analysed 11 April 2021.
- 4) Gibbie x Hmizo x Dv - 4G FREESTYLE (FREEDATA) (8 October 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imAi1Affe0k&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 11 April 2021.
- 5) Dv x Gibbie – TETRIS (PROD. BY TONIC) (24 February 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_7_7dBVTX0&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 11 April 2021.
- 6) Dv – Warning (mix. Soes) (24 June 2018). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDLlk5OTvHs&ab_channel=KempiCollege. Analysed 11 April 2021 and 12 April 2021.
- 7) Gibbie – DE WIJK (PROD. BY YAMAICA). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AJVebMhgIA&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 12 April 2021 and 13 April 2021.
- 8) Taylorr x Hmizo – Part 2 (Prod. Teekay) (15 May 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ot0kZDspBqI&ab_channel=taytjebandz. Analysed 12 April 2021 and 13 April 2021.
- 9) BARTOFSO x HMIZO x TAYLORR - OP FINESSE (PROD. PROBLEMCHILD) (31 July 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zovoedRP8F4&ab_channel=WildeWesten. Analysed 12 April 2021 and 13 April 2021.
- 10) DV – JOGGIN (Freestyle) (PROD. BY TONIC) (17 January 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYuGlzGHZ8&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 13 April 2021.
- 11) Dv - SJAAKIE (PROD. BY TONIC) (23 July 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oN103IAq-o&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 13 April 2021.
- 12) Hmizo – Concrete Barz #39 (20 March 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCJROYQa2I8&ab_channel=SPTVNL. Analysed 13 April 2021.
- 13) Dv – OPP (DATABOB) (Prod. By Jbeatz) (9 December 2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBE-ltotC20&ab_channel=DvSjaakie. Analysed 13 April 2021.

- 14) KV69 – NO HOOK #FreeV #FreeZ #FreeS (21 Augustus 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Slo8vFqF6c&ab_channel=KV69. Analysed 13 April 2021.
- 15) Chico - 11AM #5713 #SDB #GV (23 December 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orU7kuMz4Sw&ab_channel=chicovanW. Analysed 13 April 2021 and 14 April 2021.
- 16) TF - #5713 (Prod By Yamaica Productions) (9 October 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo9-thKPoM4&ab_channel=TFWestcoast. Analysed 13 April 2021 and 14 April 2021.
- 17) TF – Ik Move (26 June 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVM-PMb44cs&ab_channel=TFWestcoast. Analysed 13 April 2021 and 14 April 2021.
- 18) TF – Geen Fun (prod. T Beatz). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UKDo5rxzWM&ab_channel=TFWestcoast. Analysed 13 April 2021 and 14 April 2021.
- 19) 21. - NØHØØK/EASY (21 March 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLYDiOAEFVQ&ab_channel=TFWestcoast. Analysed 13 April 2021 and 14 April 2021.
- 20) RS – Drill Time (30 October 2016). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-F1qXMhyaw&ab_channel=5713Records. Analysed 13 April 2021 and 14 April 2021.
- 21) Chico - 7AM #5713 #SDB #GV (9 February 2021). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FM0En1U3Ko&ab_channel=chicovanW. Analysed 15 April 2021.

Independent drillers

- 1) #DUTCHDRILL GW14 #RYT – Danger Position (Prod.Jamma Beats) (6 June 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxv6yZKQDt&ab_channel=GBDXDB. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 2) #DUTCHDRILL GW14 #RYT – No Mercy (Prod.Jamma Beats) (18 January 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aSEw3kCmYI&ab_channel=GBDXDB. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 3) Khadabigfish – Balenciaga (Prod. TH6) | #HxD (14 December 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5kPv_mCziE&ab_channel=HendriksxDapoProductions. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 4) YB YB - SKODA (PROD.EMREH) (10 December 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYI0-JoWVtI&ab_channel=YBYB. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 5) YB YB – 19 (Prod.GV) (19 June 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Azb0pQJbtxA&ab_channel=YB2KEER. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 6) YB YB – Kerk (Prod.By SavvBeats) [Music Video]  (26 June 2019). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GhfDsM2WMI&ab_channel=YBYB. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 7) #EDG.YB ArraMG x Spook x DennaWB | Lockdown Sessies | Red Moons (27 July 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6-Y0fVO-Q8&ab_channel=RedMoonsStudios. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 8) Chavv X ZBV – Attack (Prod. '49) (Dir. by @redmoonsstudios) (22 May 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsVHwHVu0-U&ab_channel=RedMoonsStudios. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 9) Mogli x ArraMG x Chavv – No Mercy (Music Video) | Pressplay (29 December 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhHpPKoTiio&ab_channel=PressplayMediaNL. Analysed 14 April 2021.
- 10) #SZ6 Demontwist & Silencez6 – No Hook (1 August 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h90IdnyLOzA&ab_channel=GZ.Network. Analysed 15 April 2021.
- 11) #Y.G.O #3512 Yxngvoss x JVU – Zestien (Music Video) (Prod. Ugurmadethisone) | Pressplay (1 March 2021). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLve-KNurZg&ab_channel=PressplayMediaNL. Analysed 15 April 2021.

- 12) EA – Kabaal (Prod.SimpzBeatz) (10 December 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46UNbu4tAq8&ab_channel=EAzoektsaaf. Analysed 15 April 2021.
- 13) EA – Blind (Prod. LeoBeatz) (7 September 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99ZNgjkC2fl&ab_channel=EAzoektsaaf. Analysed 15 April 2021.
- 14) EA – Transparant Prod. Chris Rich) (29 June 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJzFSeK5S8k&ab_channel=EAzoektsaaf. Analysed 15 April 2021.
- 15) Youngsmoke – Paper (Official Music Video) (1 November 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_Yh2K29oZE&ab_channel=youngsmokeofficial. Analysed 15 April 2021.

ADDITIONAL TABLES

Additional table 1.- Regression analyses for the correlation between views and test variables

Symbol	df	β	t	sig
Weapons				
Weapon portrayal	172	0.061	0.793	0.429
Firearm portrayal	172	-0.002	-0.029	0.977
Knife portrayal	172	0.118	1.551	0.123
Physical violence				
Index violence	172	0.189	2.519	0.013*
Index narration of future or past physical assaults	172	0.189	2.52	0.013*
Index knives and stabbings	172	0.205	2.738	0.007*
Index firearms and shootings	172	0.091	1.198	0.233
Shooting someone's (house)	172	-0.069	-0.91	0.364
Stabbing someone	172	0.174	2.307	0.022*
Stabbing hand gesture	172	0.179	2.38	0.018*
Illegal economy				
Index illegal economy (non-violent crimes)	172	-0.037	-0.486	0.627
Index stealing	172	-0.032	-0.413	0.68
Index swindling	172	-0.119	-1.564	0.12
Index drugs dealing	172	0.087	1.137	0.257
Street culture				
Index dances	172	-0.34	-0.439	0.661
Index money	172	-0.07	-0.916	0.361
Index authenticity claims	172	-0.011	-0.15	0.881
Index aversion towards police	172	-0.039	-0.509	0.611
Index sex and hyper-heterosexuality	172	0.111	1.457	0.147
Index weed consumption	172	0.137	1.806	0.073**
Index fashion	172	-0.005	-0.063	0.95
Index alcohol consumption	172	0.092	1.208	0.229
Index group affiliation	172	0.07	0.92	0.359
Index locality affiliation	172	0.141	1.857	0.065**
Explicitly mentioning own neighbourhood	172	0.083	1.088	0.278
Unaddressed insults				
Index insults (unaddressed)	172	0.106	1.391	0.166
Index challenging opponents' authenticity	172	0.011	0.148	0.882
Index 'opp' running away from conflict	172	0.173	2.294	0.023*
Provocativeness				
Index threats	172	0.107	1.411	0.16
Index commanding 'opp' to be silent	172	0.024	0.314	0.754
Mentioning an undefined enemy neighbourhood	172	0.148	1.963	0.051**
Mentioning a defined enemy neighbourhood	172	0.079	1.04	0.3

* = significant when $\alpha = 0.05$; ** = significant when $\alpha = 0.1$

Additional table 2.- T-test for differences in means values of test variables between drill in Amsterdam South-East and all other city districts

Test variable	Amsterdam South-East		Residual of Amsterdam		T-test sig
	N	Mean value	N	Mean value	
Weapons					
Weapon portrayal (dichotomous)	99	0.363	74	0.5	0.075**a
Frequency weapon portrayal	99	2.838	74	6.438	0.019**a
Knife portrayal (dichotomous)	99	0.242	74	0.392	0.039**a
Frequency knife portrayal	99	1.447	74	3.357	0.028**a
Firearm portrayal (dichotomous)	99	0.142	74	0.338	0.003**a
Frequency firearm portrayal	99	1.392	74	2.816	0.131 ^b
Violence					
Index violence	99	57.887	74	44.005	0.71 ^b
Index narration physical assaults	99	15.179	74	11.952	0.034**b
Index knives and stabbings	99	17.342	74	15.029	0.092**b
Index firearms and shootings	99	18.955	74	23.1	0.269 ^b
Shooting someone's (house)	99	3.916	74	4.208	0.49 ^b
Stabbing someone	99	4.364	74	3.518	0.002**a
Stabbing hand gesture	99	8.445	74	7.175	0.017**b
Illegal economy					
Index illegal economy (non-violent crimes)	99	8.486	74	13.539	0.005**a
Index stealing	99	2.345	74	4.557	0.002**a
Index swindling	99	0.529	74	0.827	0.204 ^b
Index drugs dealing	99	1.544	74	4.195	0.017**a
Street culture					
Index dances	99	6	74	5.6	0.684 ^b
Index money	99	7.326	74	9.8	0.066**b
Index authenticity claims	99	6.369	74	6.675	0.758 ^b
Index aversion towards police	99	2.533	74	4.054	0.068**b
Index sex and hyper-heterosexuality	99	2.341	74	2.33	0.98 ^b
Index weed consumption	99	3.547	74	5.102	0.184 ^b
Index fashion	99	0.497	74	0.732	0.245 ^b
Index alcohol consumption	99	0.061	74	0.315	0.008**a
Index group affiliation	99	27.768	74	23.808	0.315 ^b
Index locality affiliation	99	3.764	74	3.699	0.916 ^b
Explicitly mentioning own neighbourhood	99	1.734	74	1.263	0.153 ^b
Unaddressed insults					
Index insults (unaddressed)	99	15.814	74	14.048	0.414 ^b
Index challenging opponents' authenticity	99	3.646	74	3.646	0.11 ^b
Index 'opp' running away from conflict	99	4.211	74	4.211	0.23 ^b
Provocativeness					
Index threats	99	4.353	74	3.537	0.208 ^b
Index commanding 'opp' to be silent	99	4.87	74	2.688	0.001**a
Explicitly addressed diss (dichotomous)	99	0.202	74	0.135	0.242 ^a
Mentioning undefined enemy neighbourhood	99	1.693	74	1.355	0.407 ^b
Mentioning defined enemy neighbourhood	99	0.411	74	0.014	0.004**a

^a = equal variances not assumed through Levene's test; ^b = equal variances assumed through Levene's test

* = significant when $\alpha = 0.05$; ** = significant when $\alpha = 0.1$

Additional Table 3.- T-test for differences in means values of test variables between drill in Amsterdam New-West and all other city districts

Test variable	Amsterdam New-West		Residual of Amsterdam		T-test sig
	N	Mean value	N	Mean value	
Weapons					
Weapon portrayal (dichotomous)	38	0.658	135	0.356	0.001 ^{*b}
Frequency weapon portrayal	38	10.811	135	5.942	0.002 ^{*a}
Knife portrayal (dichotomous)	38	0.553	135	0.427	0.001 ^{*a}
Frequency knife portrayal	38	5.478	135	3.933	0.004 ^{*a}
Firearm portrayal (dichotomous)	38	0.447	135	0.371	0.002 ^{*a}
Frequency firearm portrayal	38	4.838	135	4.534	0.027 ^{*a}
Violence					
Index violence	38	55.442	135	57.3	0.804 ^b
Index narration physical assaults	38	10.753	135	14.337	0.096 ^{**b}
Index knives and stabbings	38	12.673	135	15.499	0.352 ^b
Index firearms and shootings	38	28.1	135	25.408	0.484 ^b
Shooting someone's (house)	38	3.459	135	3.459	0.999 ^b
Stabbing someone	38	2.532	135	3.785	0.098 ^{**b}
Stabbing hand gesture	38	3.046	135	7.159	0.000 ^{*a}
Illegal economy					
Index illegal economy (non-violent crimes)	38	13.288	135	9.904	0.104 ^b
Index stealing	38	3.66	135	3.188	0.591 ^b
Index swindling	38	1.185	135	0.507	0.034 ^{*a}
Index drugs dealing	38	3.559	135	1.882	0.076 ^{**a}
Street culture					
Index dances	38	5.581	135	5.896	0.787 ^b
Index money	38	12.797	135	7.142	0.000 ^{*b}
Index authenticity claims	38	7.273	135	6.282	0.404 ^b
Index aversion towards police	38	4.616	135	2.78	0.065 ^{**b}
Index sex and hyper-heterosexuality	38	2.136	135	2.393	0.617 ^b
Index weed consumption	38	5.18	135	3.94	0.376 ^b
Index fashion	38	0.573	135	0.615	0.748 ^b
Index alcohol consumption	38	0.254	135	0.146	0.309 ^b
Index group affiliation	38	30.656	135	24.784	0.212 ^b
Index locality affiliation	38	4.616	135	3.489	0.127 ^b
Explicitly mentioning own neighbourhood	38	1.794	135	1.459	0.396 ^b
Unaddressed insults					
Index insults (unaddressed)	38	14.84	135	15.84	0.701 ^b
Index challenging opponents' authenticity	38	3.319	135	4.637	0.151 ^b
Index 'opp' running away from conflict	38	5.214	135	4.584	0.48 ^b
Provocativeness					
Index threats	38	4.432	135	3.881	0.476 ^b
Index commanding 'opp' to be silent	38	3.295	135	4.117	0.331 ^b
Explicitly addressed diss (dichotomous)	38	0.105	135	0.193	0.156 ^a
Mentioning undefined enemy neighbourhood	38	0.943	135	1.719	0.11 ^b
Mentioning defined enemy neighbourhood	38	0.028	135	0.301	0.009 ^{*a}

^a = equal variances not assumed through Levene's test; ^b = equal variances assumed through Levene's test

* = significant when $\alpha = 0.05$; ** = significant when $\alpha = 0.1$

Additional Table 4.- T-test for differences in means values of test variables between drill in Amsterdam's city centre and all other city districts

Test variable	City centre		Residual of Amsterdam		T-test sig
	N	Mean value	N	Mean value	
Weapons					
Weapon portrayal (dichotomous)	36	0.361	137	0.438	0.405 ^a
Frequency weapon portrayal	36	2.607	137	4.838	0.093 ^{**a}
Knife portrayal (dichotomous)	36	0.25	137	0.321	0.413 ^b
Frequency knife portrayal	36	1.925	137	2.353	0.67 ^b
Firearm portrayal (dichotomous)	36	0.222	137	0.226	0.959 ^b
Frequency firearm portrayal	36	0.682	137	2.347	0.01 ^{*a}
Violence					
Index violence	36	63.602	137	55.129	0.266 ^b
Index narration physical assaults	36	14.26	137	13.363	0.684 ^b
Index knives and stabbings	36	16.22	137	14.526	0.585 ^b
Index firearms and shootings	36	29.446	137	25.094	0.266 ^b
Shooting someone's (house)	36	4.372	137	3.219	0.128 ^b
Stabbing someone	36	3.008	137	3.642	0.413 ^b
Stabbing hand gesture	36	7.088	137	6.0367	0.487 ^b
Illegal economy					
Index illegal economy (non-violent crimes)	36	15.938	137	9.257	0.027 ^{*a}
Index stealing	36	6.129	137	2.546	0.008 ^{*a}
Index swindling	36	0.341	137	0.739	0.037 ^{*a}
Index drugs dealing	36	2.585	137	2.162	0.575 ^b
Street culture					
Index dances	36	6.508	137	5.942	0.468 ^b
Index money	36	7.897	137	8.526	0.709 ^b
Index authenticity claims	36	7.692	137	5.664	0.337 ^a
Index aversion towards police	36	3.93	137	4.864	0.355 ^b
Index sex and hyper-heterosexuality	36	2.533	137	2.754	0.636 ^b
Index weed consumption	36	5.661	137	6.827	0.199 ^b
Index fashion	36	1.176	137	1.093	0.028 ^{*a}
Index alcohol consumption	36	0.345	137	0.442	0.166 ^a
Index group affiliation	36	18.383	137	27.221	0.042 ^{*b}
Index locality affiliation	36	3.121	137	4.14	0.303 ^b
Explicitly mentioning own neighbourhood	36	0.905	137	2.333	0.002 ^{*a}
Unaddressed insults					
Index insults (unaddressed)	36	10.584	137	14.749	0.281 ^b
Index challenging opponents' authenticity	36	3.571	137	5.411	0.576 ^b
Index 'opp' running away from conflict	36	3.64	137	5.084	0.182 ^b
Provocativeness					
Index threats	36	3.651	137	4.094	0.573 ^b
Index commanding 'opp' to be silent	36	3.198	137	4.131	0.279 ^b
Explicitly addressed diss (dichotomous)	36	0.25	137	0.153	0.229 ^a
Mentioning undefined enemy neighbourhood	36	1.73	137	1.501	0.646 ^b
Mentioning defined enemy neighbourhood	36	0.298	137	0.226	0.712 ^b

^a = equal variances not assumed through Levene's test; ^b = equal variances assumed through Levene's test

* = significant when $\alpha = 0.05$; ** = significant when $\alpha = 0.1$

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.- Code list for visual symbols

Location (dichot.)	y/n	Face covers (dichot.)	y/n	Hand gestures	Freq	B-roll	Freq	Vehicles (dich)	y/n
Park (vloc1)		Balaclava (eyes open) (vface1)		Gang signs (vhand1)		Security camera's (vroll1)		Scooter (vveh1)	
Skate park (vloc2)		Balaclava (total cover) (vface2)		Sexual (vhand2)		Warning signs (vroll2)		(Cross)motor (vveh2)	
Sports court (vloc3)		Three-hole balaclava (vface3)		Roll/smoke joint (vhand3)		Exit signs (vroll3)		Car (no police) (vveh3)	
Playground (vloc4)		Mouth mask (vface4)		Snorting (vhand4)		Street name signs (vroll4)		(BMX) bike (vveh4)	
Basement storage (vloc5)		Ice hockey mask (vface5)		Cut throat (vhand5)		Flat (vroll5)		Quad (vveh5)	
Kitchen (vloc6)		Caricature mask (vface6)		Pistol shooting (vhand6)		Public buildings (vroll6)			
Bathroom (vloc7)		Gas mask (vface7)		Rifle shooting (vhand7)		Police (wo)men (vroll7)			
Bedroom (vloc8)		Motor cross mask (vface8)		Stabbing/swinging (vhand8)		Police station (vroll8)			
Garage/parking area (vloc9)		Motor helmet (vface9)		Middle finger (vhand9)		Police vehicle (vroll9)			
Stairs (vloc10)		Bandana (vface10)		Money stack (vhand10)		Public transport (vroll10)		Weapons	Freq
Roof (vloc11)		(Sun/ski)glasses (vface11)		Free (vhand11)		Statues (vroll11)		Pistol (vwpn1)	
At a fence (vloc12)		Flag (vface12)		Chit chat (vhand12)		Tree(s) (vroll12)		Knife (vwpn2)	
(Flat) hallway (vloc13)		Animated blurring (vface13)		Shhh (vhand13)		Street lights (vroll13)		Automatic hand-gun (vwpn3)	
In front of flat (vloc14)		(Football) T-shirt (vface14)		Hot head (vhand14)		Graffiti (vroll14)		Rifle (vwpn4)	
In front of mall (vloc15)		(Jacket) hoodie (vface15)		Heart (vhand15)		Sports court (vroll15)		Shotgun (vwpn5)	
In front of brick wall (vloc16)		Hand in front of face (vface16)		Eating (vhand16)		Public street (vroll16)		Ammunition (vwpn6)	
In front of graffiti wall (vloc17)		Dark light (vface17)		Running man (vhand17)		Shop/cafe (vroll17)		Crossbow (vwpn7)	
In (front of) shop/cafe (vloc18)		Items	Freq	Whats happening (vhand18)		Rooftop shot (vroll18)			
In front of tank (vloc19)		Joint (vitm1)		Two arm shoot (vhand19)		Garage (vroll19)			
In front of police car(s) (vloc20)		Much cannabis (vitm2)		Driving high (vhand20)		Dilapidated building (vroll20)			
In front of church (vloc21)		Powder drugs (vitm3)		Dances (ref1 ref2 ref3)	Freq	Fence (vroll21)			
Street (vloc22)		Nitrogen balloon (vitm4)		Below the knee (vdan1)		Visual effects	Freq	Additional remarks	
Public transport site (vloc23)		Weighting scale (vitm5)		Moscow march (vdan2)		Mentioning artist(s) (veff1)			
Industrial area (vloc24)		Merchandise (dich) (vitm6)		Wet man down (vdan3)		Artistic disclaimer (veff2)			
Construction site (vloc25)		Pin cards (vitm7)		(All) bops (vdan4)		Videographer tag (veff3)			
Under viaduct (vloc26)		Money (vitm8)		Gun lean (vdan5)		Song name (veff4)			
Back garden (vloc27)		Microphone (dich) (vitm9)		One lean (vdan6)		Label/platform (veff5)			
Living room (vloc28)		Torch (vitm10)		Pirate swing (vdan7)		Marking words (di.) (veff6)			
In studio (vloc29)		Burning item (vitm11)		Woo walk (vdan8)		Flashing lines (di.) (veff7)			
In front of school (vloc30)		Baseball bat (vitm12)		Woo swerve (vdan9)		Police lights (di.) (veff8)			
At water (vloc31)		Crowbar (vitm13)		Standing run (vdan10)		Fire in background (veff9)			
In front of castle (vloc32)		Body bag (vitm14)		Head hang (vdan11)		Smoke (veff10)			
In front of house door (vloc33)		Liquor (vitm15)				Anim. explosion (veff11)			
In mountains (vloc34)		Ankle monitor (vitm16)				Social media (veff12)			
In front of stadium (vloc35)		Toy gun (vitm17)				'Free' tag (veff13)			
						R.I.P. (veff14)			

Song name	Views	Seconds
Artists and drill group(s)		
Neighbourhood(s)	Upload date	
Channel	Freestyle/cypher?	

Appendix 2.- Code list for audio symbols

<u>Unaddressed disses</u>		Freq	<u>Violent act towards opp</u>		Freq	<u>Threats</u>		Freq
Opp is running away (aopp1)			Fighting (avio1)			Do not come close/better run (athr1)		
Opp is hiding (aopp2)			(Wanting to) shoot someone (avio2)			(Better not) come to my neighbourhood (athr2)		
Opp only being a short time on opp block (aopp3)			(Wanting to) stab someone (avio3)			Don't talk (about me/us) (athr3)		
Sex with opp's girl/family (aopp4)			Generally 'getting' someone (avio4)			Don't act tough (athr4)		
Opp lying (clown/comedian/cap) (aopp5)			Generally killing someone (avio5)			Pay on time (athr5)		
Opp is fake (aopp6)			Aiming (at bodypart) (avio6)			You are not safe (athr6)		
Opp being silent (aopp7)			Drive by shooting/stabbing (avio7)			I will find you (athr7)		
Opp is lame/nothing (aopp8)			Throwing molotovs (avio8)			You don't want this/it/beef (athr8)		
Opp is snitch (aopp9)			Backing up beef for friend (avio9)			If you want it you can get it (athr9)		
Opp is talking too much (on chat) (aopp10)			<u>Deviant act</u>		Freq	I will hurt you (athr10)		
Opp is playing games (aopp11)			Hiding for police (adev1)			Do not make me mad (athr11)		
Disrespecting opp's grave (aopp12)			Being criminally active (adev2)			Better respect me (athr12)		
(Friend/family of) opp is wounded (aopp13)			Doing/did jail time (adev3)			<u>Claims on authenticity</u>		Freq
(Friend/family of) opp is dead (aopp14)			Being a <i>good</i> criminal (adev4)			Really doing what is said (aaut1)		
Smoking opp's ashes (aopp15)			Stealing: robbery/burglary (adev5)			Not lying/speaking truth (aaut2)		
Wishing opp would vanish (aopp16)			Possessing gun (adev6)			Having a street life/never lacking (aaut3)		
Opp's friends don't have his back (aopp17)			Possessing knife (adev7)			Criminal since young age (aaut4)		
Catching opp lacking (aopp18)			Possessing drugs (adev8)			Police looking for them (aaut5)		
Opp is broke/lacking money (aopp19)			Dealing drugs (adev9)			Refuting/countering others' claims (aaut6)		
Opp is a bad drugs dealer (aopp20)			Smoking/rolling cannabis (adev10)			Doing something all by himself (aaut7)		
Opp is scared of him/being a pussy (aopp21)			Stealing vehicles/stolen ped (adev11)			<u>Territory</u>		Freq
Opp is from area outside Randstad (aopp22)			Swindling (adev12)			Implicitly mentioning own neighbourhood (aterr1)		
Neek (aopp23)			Looking for trouble (adev13)			Explicitly mentioning own neighbourhood (aterr2)		
Addressed disses: yes/no? (addressed_dich)			<u>Mantras</u>		Freq	Mentioning an undefined enemy neighbourhood (aterr3)		
<u>Peers</u>		Freq	No face no case (aman1)			Mentioning a defined enemy neighbourhood (aterr4)		
Explicitly mentioning friend(s) (apee1)			I am/we are not talking with authorities (aman2)			Being in the streets (aterr5)		
Implicitly mentioning friend(s) (bro) (apee2)			Jump out [...] (aman4)			Luring someone to own block (aterr6)		
Explicitly mentioning affiliated drill group (apee3)			Hop off [...] (aman5)			<u>Money/consumption</u>		Freq
Mentioning own shooter(s) (apee4)			Get back gang (aman6)			Wanting money (amon1)		
Mentioning own cheffer(s) (apee5)			Don't snitch (aman7)			Girl wanting money (amon2)		
Being with ' <i>criminals</i> '/bad boys (apee6)			Block is hot (aman8)			Looking for money (amon3)		
<u>Sex</u>		Freq	Head is hot (aman9)			Accumulating/having much money (amon4)		
Girls wanting sex/attracted to him(asex1)			Free [...] (aman9)			Spending money (amon5)		
Rejecting girl(s) who want(s) sex/attention (asex2)			<u>General activities</u>		Freq	Prices (amon6)		
Commanding girl(s) to perform sexual act (asex3)			Driving (agac1)			Doing it for money (amon7)		
Having sex (asex4)			Eating (agac2)			<u>Emotions</u>		Freq
<u>Items</u>		Freq	Drinking (agac3)			Mad/angry (aemo1)		
Tracksuit/jacket (aitm1)			<u>References</u>		Freq	Hating authorities (aemo2)		Repeated voice loops (aeff1)
Designer brands (aitm2)			Football (aref1)			Enjoying deviant acts (aemo3)		Darker voice sound (aeff2)
Sneakers (aitm3)			Snapchat (aref2)			Grieve (aemo4)		Producer tag (aeff3)
Balaclava (aitm4)			Specific dances (aref3)			Missing someone (aemo5)		Ad libs (aeff4)
Jewelry (aitm5)			Car(s) (aref4)			Apathic/I don't care (aemo6)		External excerpts (aeff5)
Nitrogen balloon (aitm6)			Scooter/ped (aref5)			Distrustful (aemo7)		Shortly removing beat (aeff6)
Crowbar (aitm7)						Happy (aemo8)		
						Stress (aemo9)		

Appendix 3.- Construction of all indexes with weighted variables [*continues on next page*]
(a) = audio; (v) = visuals

<i>Weapon portrayal</i>	<i>Firearm and shootings</i>	<i>Criminal activities</i>	<i>(Re)telling physical assault</i>	<i>Violence</i>	<i>Opp avoiding conflict</i>	
Pistol (v)	Pistol shoot hand gesture (v)	Much cannabis (v)	Fighting (a)	Cut throat hand gesture (v)	Aiming at body (a)	Running man (v)
Knife (v)	Rifle shoot hand gesture (v)	Powder drugs (v)	Shooting someone (a)	Pistol shoot hand gesture (v)	Drive by shoot/stab (a)	Opp running away (a)
Automatic handgun (v)	Two arm shoot gesture (v)	Weighting scale (v)	Stabbing someone (a)	Rifle shoot hand gesture (v)	Throwing molotovs (a)	Opp hiding (a)
Rifle (v)	Pistol portrayal (v)	Pin cards (v)	'Getting' someone (a)	Stab hand gesture (v)	Backing up beef for friend (a)	Opp short on block (a)
Shotgun (v)	Auto. handgun portrayal (v)	Crowbar (v)	Killing someone (a)	Two arm shoot gesture (v)	Do not come close (a)	Opp scared of him (a)
Ammunition (v)	Rifle portrayal (v)	Ankle monitor (v)	Aiming at someone (a)	Pistol portrayal (v)	Come to my neighbourh. (a)	<i>Dances</i>
Crossbow (v)	Shotgun portrayal (v)	Being criminally active (a)	Drive by shoot/stab (a)	Knife portrayal (v)	Don't talk (a)	Blow the knee (v)
<i>Firearm portrayal</i>	Ammunition portrayal (v)	Stealing (a)	Throwing molotovs (a)	Auto. handgun portrayal (v)	Don't act tough (a)	Moscow march (v)
Pistol (v)	Toy gun (v)	Dealing drugs (a)	I will hurt you (a)	Rifle portrayal (v)	Pay on time (a)	Wet man down (v)
Automatic handgun (v)	Shooting someone (a)	Criminal since young (a)	Jump out [...] (a)	Shotgun portrayal (v)	You are not safe (a)	All bops (v)
Rifle (v)	Mentioning 'shooters' (a)	Police looking for them (a)	Hop of [...] (a)	Ammunition (v)	I will find you (a)	Gun lean (v)
Shotgun (v)	<i>Dealing drugs</i>	No face no case (a)	<i>Sex</i>	Crossbow (v)	You don't this this (a)	One lean (v)
Ammunition (v)	Much cannabis (v)	Silent to authorities (a)	Sexual hand gesture (v)	Baseball bat (v)	If you want it, you get it (a)	Pirate swing (v)
<i>Knives and stabbings</i>	Powder drugs (v)	Being with criminals (a)	Sex with opp's girl/family (a)	Body bag (v)	I will hurt you (a)	Woo walk (v)
Stabbing hand gesture (v)	Weighting scale (v)	Crowbar (a)	Girl wanting sex (a)	Wet man down dance (v)	Do not make me mad (a)	Woo swerve (v)
Wet man down dance (v)	Opp is bad drug dealer (a)	<i>Alcohol consumption</i>	Rejecting girl wanting sex (a)	Pirate swing dance (v)	Better respect me (a)	Standing run (v)
Pirate swing dance (v)	Possessing much drugs (a)	Liquor (v)	Commanding girl for sex (a)	Opp is wounded (a)	Stealing (a)	Head hang (v)
Knife portrayal (v)	Dealing drugs (a)	Drinking (a)	Having sex (a)	Opp is dead (a)	Possessing gun (a)	<i>Challenging authenticity</i>
Stabbing someone (a)	<i>Group affiliation</i>	<i>Swindling</i>	<i>Fashion</i>	Fighting (a)	Possessing knife (a)	Opp lying (a)
Possessing knife (a)	Gang signs (v)	Pin cards (v)	Tracksuit/jacket (a)	Shooting someone (a)	Looking for trouble (a)	Opp is fake (a)
Mentioning 'cheffers' (a)	Exp. mention friends (a)	Swindling (a)	Designer brands (a)	Stabbing someone (a)	Luring to own block (a)	Opp is silent (a)
<i>Locality affiliation</i>	Imp. mention friends (a)	<i>Weed consumption</i>	Sneakers (a)	'Getting' someone (a)	Mentioning shooters (a)	Opp is lame (a)
Come to my neighb. (a)	Exp. mention drill group (a)	Smoke joint hand gest. (v)	<i>Stealing</i>	Mentioning cheffers (a)	Hop off [...] (a)	Opp is snitch (a)
Imp. mention neighb. (a)	Mentioning own shooters (a)	Joint (v)	Crowbar (v)	Jump out [...] (a)	Get back gang (a)	Opp is playing games (a)
Exp. mention neighb. (a)	Mentioning own cheffers (a)	Smoking opp's ashes (a)	Crowbar (a)			Opp is lacking (a)
Block is hot (a)	Being with criminals (a)	Smoke/roll cannabis (a)	Stealing (a)			Opp is scared/pussy (a)

Continuation of appendix 3.- Construction of all indexes with weighted variables

<i>Insults</i>	<i>Money</i>	<i>Authenticity claims</i>	<i>Police aversion</i>	<i>Commanding silence</i>
Middle finger (v)	Money stack hand gesture (v)	Police (wo)men B-roll (v)	Free hand gesture (v)	Chit chat hand gesture (v)
Opp is running away (a)	Money (v)	Police vehicle B-roll (v)	Police (wo)men B-roll (v)	Shhh hand gesture (v)
Opp is hiding (a)	Opp is broke (a)	Ankle monitor (v)	Police station B-roll (v)	Opp is talking too much (a)
Opp only short time on block (a)	Swindling (a)	Really doing what is said (a)	Police vehicle B-roll (v)	Don't talk (a)
Sex with opp's girl/family (a)	Wanting money (a)	Not lying/speaking truth (a)	Not talking with authorities (a)	
Opp is lying (a)	Girl wanting money (a)	Having a street life/never lacking (a)	Don't snitch (a)	
Opp is fake (a)	Looking for money (a)	Criminal since young age (a)	Hating authorities (a)	
Opp is silent (a)	Accumulating/having much money (a)	Police looking for them (a)		
Opp is lame/nothing (a)	Spending money (a)	Refuting aut. endangering claims (a)		
Opp is snitch (a)	Prices (a)	Doing something all by himself (a)		
Opp is talking too much (a)	Doing it for money (a)			
Opp is playing games (a)	Pay on time (a)			
Disrespecting opp's grave (a)				
Opp is wounded (a)				
Opp is dead (a)				
Smoking opp's ashes (a)				
Wishing opp would vanish (a)				
Opp's friends don't have his back (a)				
Catching opp lacking (a)				
Opp is broke (a)				
Opp is bad drugs dealer (a)				
Opp is scared/pussy (a)				
Opp is from area outside Randstad (a)				
Opp is a neek (a)				

Appendix 4.- Visual overview of dances in music videos

Names are created by myself or inspired by watching videos compiling and naming dances in drill videos.



Below the knee

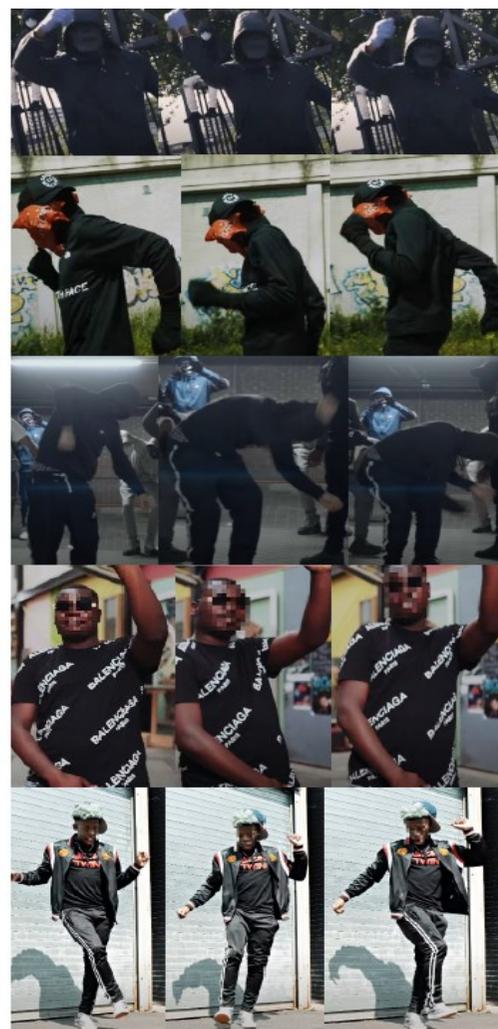
Bop*

Gun lean

Head hang

Moscow march

One lean



Pirate swing

Standing run

Wet man down

Woo swerve

Woo walk

* = there are many variations on the 'bop' dance'. However, the rotation of both hands is a central element in the majority of variants.

AMSTERDAM DRILL MAP

This ‘drill map’ will serve as a guideline for those who want to understand the Amsterdam drill groups, their respective drillers and which neighbourhoods they are representing. The following descriptions are based on the process of scouring YouTube and Instagram during the procedure of selecting cases for content analysis. Because the social dynamics within and between drill groups are subject to change, this overview will only be valid for the time of writing — which is July 2021. Drillers can leave groups and enter new groups, whilst conflicts and allyships between drill groups could also vanish and suddenly appear. As will be illustrated, some recent drill groups are also identified whilst finishing this thesis. This shows that the drill scene is continuously changing. However, professionals can approach this overview as a frame of reference in understanding general dynamics between and within drill groups.

The descriptions of which symbolic themes are manifested significantly more or less throughout their musical production are based on the results of content analysis and related T-test analyses. The tables related to these results are left out of this overview as this would cause a plethora of information. Solely the most significant insights are therefore presented. Furthermore, the descriptions of drill groups are accompanied by a QR code that will lead to a representative music video of this group. Scanning this with a digital device that is able to recognise QR codes will enable the reader to experience the music videos of these groups themselves. First, an overview of the present drill groups in the city district of Amsterdam South-East will be given. Thereafter, the drill groups in New-West will be presented and finally, drill groups in the city centre will be discussed.

SOUTH-EAST

Kikkenstein Bende (KSB): *Kikkenstein/Kraaiennest (1104)*



KSB, as an abbreviation of Kikkenstein Bende, is one of the most famous drill groups in Amsterdam. Besides Karma K, their most prominent artist, the group consists of Evos, YoungSlice (YS), GreyK, Wouter22, RicoKSB, KoeriKSB, TonyKSB, DarrKSB and Klabba M. By representing the postcode area ‘1104’, they affiliate with the neighbourhood Kraaiennest and more specifically, the street Kikkenstein. The hyperlocal reference to a very specific micro-place is an element we see being ubiquitous in Amsterdam drill as it is copied from its

UK counterpart. Because both terms start with the letter K, members frequently embody a hand sign signalling this letter. Symbols concerning knives and stabbings are used averagely more than other Amsterdam drill groups, whilst they seldomly portray a weapon of any kind in their music videos. Members of KSB heavily engage in a conflict with drill formation 'FOG'; this may also be perceived as the bloodiest and most heated conflict in the Amsterdam drill scene. Therefore, it is no surprise that KSB members frequently symbolise antagonistic expressions towards FOG and its members.

Zone 42 (Z42): *Kraaiennest/Bijlmer (1104 & 1102)*

Affiliated with KSB is Z42, whose members also represent the neighbourhood Kraaiennest. As they frequently collaborate with KSB, they are also supposedly good friends of each other. Therefore, the intergroup relationship causes Z42 to be engaged in a conflict with FOG as well. The group consists of LS, SevenK, Denna and VL. YFB, Bailey and DF (later named 'Shortguy') used to be part of the group, but are contemporarily no part of the group



anymore. The themes and symbols of their music videos that significantly differ from the aggregation of all other drill groups resemble the distinguishing elements of drill group KSB. On the one hand, namely, they averagely portray fewer weapons and on the other hand, they symbolise averagely more narratives and inscriptions concerning physical assaults with knives. It is, however, remarkable that Z42 significantly address more explicit disses towards other drillers, groups and rival territories than the aggregation of all other Amsterdam drill groups.

Hit Squad 365 (HSQ365): *Kraaiennest/Bijlmer (1104 & 1102)*



The intergroup relationship between KSB en Z42 becomes especially apparent in the light of drill group Hit Squad 365 (HSQ365). This group consists of, on the one hand, artists who are members of KSB and Z42 and, on the other hand, artists from Kraaiennest who solely affiliate with HSQ as their only drill group. Therefore, this group could be perceived as a fusion of drillers from Kraaiennest. Members of HSQ are Devv Tenkay, C-Dogg, K4, Karma K, YoungSlice (YS), SevenK, VL, Denna, KoeriKSB, LS and Skeeze00. Unsurprisingly, due to the blend of Z42 and KSB, antagonistic inscriptions and narratives

towards FOG are regularly expressed. The existence of this group implies that drill group membership could be fluid and multiple at once, whilst friendships and allies could exist at an intragroup and intergroup level simultaneously.

Kruitberg Chamos (KBC): *Kruitberg/Kraaiennest (1104)*

We are still staying in Kraaiennest; this time to discuss the Kruitberg Chamos, abbreviated to KBC. Consisting of Klepperr, Bailey, Millions, Chamo, Killy4side and C3, this group represents Kruitberg, a street in Kraaiennest. By incorporating this hyperlocal reference in their name, they are, just like KSB, copying the hyperlocal fashion from UK drill. Notable is the relatively low amount of available music videos, but the relatively high numbers



of views they attract on these music videos. Because of the low amount of music videos available (3), however, comparative T-tests based on symbols and themes are not executed. Nonetheless, from a more qualitative stance, the music videos seem professionally recorded on both audio and visual aspects. The themes and symbols are more focused on street cultural fashion and practices whilst being reserved towards communicating a relative abundance of violent symbols. Noteworthy is that, although they do not have many music videos online, they have relatively many views. This phenomenon could be attributed to collaborations with more mainstream artists belonging to the same label that some KBC members are signed to, named '*Quatro Vision*'. These collaborations, the contract with the mainstream label '*Quatro Vision*' and the high number of views imply that KBC could be seen as an archetype of the commodification and popularisation of the Amsterdam drill movement.

#34: *Ganzenhoef/Kraaiennest (1103 & 1104)*



As a portmanteau of postcode areas 1103 and 1104, drill group #34 simultaneously represent the neighbourhoods Ganzenhoef and Kraaiennest, respectively. Members of this group are M34, Nytje, Scovic, B3, DoubleMz and Swlpe. Money and consumption practices seem to be a central symbolic theme within their music videos. Furthermore, they visually portray significantly fewer weapons, use significantly fewer symbols concerning firearms and shootings, and are generally more reticent to depict violent symbols than the aggregation of all other Amsterdam drill groups. Therefore, the construction of a violent imaginary is relatively

less prevalent and the pursuit of money seems to be a more central element within their production. Nonetheless, they significantly portray more symbols related to challenging their competitors' authenticity. As they frequently express antagonistic expressions towards Ballin30, a rapper from Rotterdam, it teaches us that conflicts can exceed city limits.

Violent Goose (VG): *Ganzenhoef (1103)*

Violent Goose (VG), a drill group representing the neighbourhood Ganzenhoef, consists of artists YD3, RF, DMP and Elf. Driller E3 used to be a member of this group but is currently not a part of the formation anymore. Interestingly, VG members frequently collaborate with drillers from drill group Z42, but antagonistic expressions towards a rivalling group from Z42 are lacking in their production. This shows that, despite increasing its likelihood, it is not a necessity for drillers to explicitly address antagonistic expressions towards rivalling drill groups of friends, allies or collaborators.



Real Young Trappers (RYT): *Bijlmer/Ganzenhoef (1102 & 1103)*



The formation of 'Real Young Trappers' (RYT) consists of drillers GW14, originating from *Ganzenhoef (1103)*, and Firra Haze, representing *Bijlmer (1102)*. The central element in their music videos cannot be missed. Whereas Dutch drill, inspired by UK drill, is frequently linked to knives, these drillers are not hesitant to portray an arsenal of firearms and similarly symbolise the use of them through narratives. Hence, all symbols related to firearms, shootings and the material portrayal of them are significantly used more than the aggregation of all other Amsterdam drill groups. Noteworthy is the absence of an explicitly defined 'opponent', making it unclear whether they are engaged in conflicts with other drillers. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the social dynamics of this 'duo' is somewhat different from the traditional understanding of drill groups. To substantiate, the fact that it consists of two individuals — contesting the idea of a 'group' — representing different neighbourhoods distinguishes the social dynamics in RYT from other 'groups'.

1102 Entertainment: *Bijlmer (1102)*

1102 Entertainment, representing post code area 1102, consists of a variety of artists who do not solely produce drill. Artists who can, nonetheless, be classified as drillers in this group are Firra Haze, Revv, V2 Andere Versi and Yxngvoss. This suggests that drillers can be part of a music group, but that this does not necessarily have to be a ‘drill group’ where artists are producing solely drill music. Similar to RYT, the drillers within this group are more focused on symbols centring firearms and shootings than knives and stabbings.

Trap Daily (TD): *Bijlmer (1102)*

As a relatively new drill group, Trap Daily represents post code area 1102 positioned in de Bijlmer. Members of this group are M3nko, Chubz and possibly more members. These members do not necessarily have to be drillers, as they can also be friends. Relatively little information is known about this group because they were only recently identified. Hence, they solely have two music videos online. It is nevertheless, in line with the recommendations above, important to take account of this drill group so professionals could closely monitor the drill scene and new developments. This could support a better understanding of the entire subculture.

Fully Op Gevaar (FOG): *Venserpolder/Reigersbos (1102 & 1106)*

Within postcode area 1102, there is a small neighbourhood called *Venserpolder* that is being represented by a couple of drillers. Together with artists from a neighbourhood on the other side of Amsterdam South-East called Reigersbos, entailing the postcode area 1106, they are collectively constituting drill group *Fully Op Gevaar* (FOG). Hence, they frequently refer to both ‘zone 2’ and ‘zone 6’ as their neighbourhood. Members of FOG are Lowkey,



RS (deceased), RK, KT, V2, Jovv, S2lenciio, Tyzonetwo, R9, Guapo, DR and y.RS — which means ‘young RS’ as he is his brother. Interestingly, the represented neighbourhoods are not adjacent to each other, which suggests that drill groups can represent territories that consist of

multiple enclaves. As previously mentioned, FOG is in a heated conflict with KSB and this is also frequently communicated throughout their songs through the use of antagonistic symbols. FOG songs significantly have more music videos where they portray weapons, especially knives, than the aggregation of all other Amsterdam drill groups. Their songs are also heavily centred around symbols constructing a violent reputation and significantly less focused on symbols on the ‘weaker side of the street cultural spectrum’ (see Ilan, 2015) such as fashion and mainstream practices. In other words, music videos from FOG averagely stress the construction of a violent imaginary more than the combination of other drill groups. This could have aided them in becoming one of the most popular drill groups in Amsterdam drill, as this enhances the catalytic function of YouTube’s algorithm.

SZ6: Reigersbos (1106)



SZ6, representing ‘zone 6’ derived from postcode area 1106, is a drill group consisting of Demontwist, Silencez6, Younes and AT. Their music videos attract relatively few views and the amount of available music videos is little. It is therefore also hard to identify themes and symbols that are significantly highlighted throughout their music. However, as discussed in the recommendation section, it is important to acknowledge and recognise drill groups that are relatively ‘unknown’. It supports a better understanding of the wider drill subculture.

6Squad (6SQ): Reigersbos (1106)

6Squad is a drill group consisting of Smokeyosix, VH and possibly more individuals who are representing the postcode area 1106. Also with little music videos and information on their group online, their embeddedness in the Amsterdam drill scene and their prominent themes and symbols throughout their music are hard to identify. Groups that attract little views, have few music videos and are, therefore, quite unknown amongst the public are nonetheless



important to recognise in the Amsterdam drill scene. Again, as discussed above, understanding the groups and dynamics in the Amsterdam drill scene could contribute to a more ‘street literate’ reading of the scene. Moreover, the online monitoring of the Amsterdam drill scene could aid

professionals in picking up early signs of youth who attempt to construct an online violent imaginary that can have dangerous implications (cf. Roks & van den Broek, 2013).

7evenSideMusic (7T): Gein (1106/1107)



During the final phase of finishing this thesis, music from 7T got on my radar. Hence, this group is relatively new and did not produce many music videos yet. In line with the recommendations, it is important to monitor new developments and new groups. Members of this group are Ksix6, J7, Monfrère, SD and YS. They represent the neighbourhood Gein and seem to be on good terms with drill group KBC. Because there are not many music videos online (solely two), strong claims regarding their symbolic preferences stay out.

Independent Drillers

As discussed earlier, Amsterdam drillers are not always part of a drill group. Some drillers rather operate independently; however, they do always represent a certain territory in their songs. The phenomenon of representing localities in Amsterdam drill, regardless of not possessing drill group membership, suggests an interwovenness of locality and the music genre. Drillers who represent a neighbourhood in Amsterdam South-East but do not affiliate with a drill group are YB YB representing Venserpolder, and YoungSmoke, Shortguy (formerly named 'DF' and member of Z42), ValutaC and YFB (former member of Z42³⁴) representing Kraaiennest.

³⁴ Although ValutaC and YFB are making music on the YouTube channel 'Family Gang Nation' (FGN), I do not consider FGN as a drill formation or drill group but as a distribution channel. This is because they do not promote themselves as a drill group but rather as a digital platform.

NEW-WEST

Lelyland Spartans Gang (LSG): *Lelylaan*

Lelyland Spartans Gang (LSG), or simply Lelyland Spartans, are a drill group representing the neighbourhood *Lelylaan*. Members of LSG are Biggskaki, Stille57, Jama, Spljashy, Berry van het Westen and Flacodidit. Lelyland Spartans are engaged in a running conflict with drill group *73 de Pijp* and are therefore keen on insulting and challenging members of this group. As a phenomenon that is described in other cases as well, the friendly intergroup relationship



between KSB and *73 de Pijp* causes Lelyland Spartans to additionally communicate antagonistic symbols towards members of drill group KSB. However, as ‘*a friend of an opp is also an opp*’, having the same ‘opp’ could be an initiator for allyship. Hence, Lelyland Spartans seem to be on the right terms with KSB’s rivals FOG. Additionally noteworthy is that the symbols and themes in their music videos do not significantly differ from the aggregation of all Amsterdam drill groups. We could, therefore, assume that music from Lelyland Spartans is exemplary for typical Amsterdam drill production.

5713: *New-West*

Notable amongst drillers in New-West is the sense of unity they symbolise. Under the public transport code ‘5713’, covering the entire city district of New-West, drillers unify, collaborate on songs and are featured in each other’s clips. As opposed to Amsterdam South-East, which possesses a mosaic of drill groups and interrelated conflicts, drillers from Amsterdam New-West seem to form one front. Consequently, besides members of *Lelyland Spartans*, drillers do not affiliate with a traditional drill group. Rather, they come together under the code ‘5713’, or postcode area ‘1069’ for drillers representing the neighbourhood in New-West called *Osdorp*. Drillers from Amsterdam New-West are DV, Chico, TF, 21., KV 69, Gibbie, BryanTR, RakaVW, Hmizo and Taylorr. The predominant symbols in their music videos are, in respect to all other drill groups, the frequent portrayal of all kinds of weapons, whilst symbols

surrounding the act of stabbing someone are significantly portrayed less. Besides drill group *Lelyland Spartans*, drillers from *5713* seem to refrain from expressing antagonistic symbols towards explicitly addressed opponents and neighbourhoods. Therefore, it is unclear to the wider public which ‘opps’ they are referring to in their songs. Moreover, the aesthetics of drillers from *5713* are oftentimes different from drill in other city districts. The *beat* is frequently high-pitched, with mellow piano melodies which sometimes overlap each other simultaneously, combined with multiple bass kicks that are heard shortly after each and played ephemerally throughout the songs. Lastly, as illustrated in figure 69, the dance ‘Data bop’, where a hand is placed on the chest whilst bumping the chest towards the air and rotating the full body from left to right, is characteristic for drill in Amsterdam New-West. The term additionally refers to the person ‘Data’, who is supposedly an incarcerated friend of theirs.



Figure 69.- Databop dance

(y.)73 de Pijp: *de Pijp* (1073)

De Pijp, a neighbourhood that is adjacent to the south side of the city centre, is one of the most — if not the most — gentrified neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. However, a small area in de Pijp called ‘*de Diamantbuurt*’ has encountered criminality and nuisance for decades (Vugts, 2017; AT5, 2018). Amidst the gentrified scene of the streets, there is a drill group called *73 de Pijp* with members originating from *de Diamantbuurt*. Members of this group are



Choppa, T.Y., DK, TFrazz, Stackz, VK, RB and Congoloose. As mentioned earlier, they are engaged in a conflict with Lelyland Spartans, but also with Rotterdam drill group ‘24’. The latter conflict was allegedly the inducement for a fatal stabbing in the coastal town *Scheveningen*. Whilst they have significantly fewer music videos portraying weapons than other drill groups, they lyrically communicate their willingness to shoot someone significantly more. This is evidenced as they express their possession of firearms instead of knives through sentences such as “*I don’t have a shank [knife], I walk with iron [gun]*”, “*big bullets, I’m not on stabbings*”, “*I come with that Glock [gun], no stabbing*” and “*don’t come with chef [knife] if I pull up with sticks [guns]*”. *73 de Pijp* also has a ‘subgroup’ of younger artists producing songs under the name ‘*y.73 de Pijp*’. Here, as we have also seen amongst brothers of drillers, the prefix ‘*y.*’ means ‘*younging(s)*’ — or ‘*younger one(s)*’. Members of *y.73* are Zaf G, Cizri and SR. *Y.73 de Pijp* does not have enough music videos available to make strong statistical claims regarding the extent to which some symbols are used.

Cilinder Bende (CB): *de Pijp*



Spearheaded by GoGetter, de Pijp is represented by another group named ‘Cilinder Bende’. Although GoGetter states in an interview that he currently lives in de Jordaan, a traditional labourer’s neighbourhood on the west side of the city centre, he is still representing de Pijp throughout his songs (GabMorrison, 2020b). This suggests that residence in a neighbourhood is not a necessary element for representing this same neighbourhood. The group additionally consists of JR Sosa, ML (also known as YICB) and other peers such as ‘Chuckie’ and ‘Krasi’ who do not publicly produce drill music. This implies that a ‘drill group’ does not

necessarily have to include drill *artists*, but that they could also be a group of friends in which some individuals produce drill music. The term ‘cilinder’ in the group name refers to the core of a keylock, which symbolises their prominent symbolic theme and themes in their music videos: burglary. The act of stealing is therefore also symbolised significantly more than all other drill groups, whilst threats and lyrically referring to stabbing someone are expressed significantly less. This is not to say that violence is not a theme in their music videos — as this would contest the classification of ‘drill’ — but it is simply overshadowed by symbols of burglaries.

Elke Dag Geld (EDG): Steigereiland (1086), Ijburg (1087), Spaarndammerbuurt (1013), Holendrecht

Elke Dag Geld (EDG) is a drill group that crosses multiple borders.

They do not solely cross neighbourhood borders by representing different separated neighbourhoods across the city, but also exceed city borders as members are additionally representing cities to the north of Amsterdam called Zaanstad and Zaandam (referred to by the digits ‘75’). Members of EDG represent the Amsterdam neighbourhoods Steigereiland with the postcode 1086, Ijburg with



postcode 1087, Spaarndammerbuurt with postcode 1013 and Holendrecht in Amsterdam South-East. This implies that drill groups do not necessarily have to represent one singular territory or operate in one city. By abbreviating the postcode to the last two digits and placing them in front of their artist names on songs, drillers are clearly communicating the neighbourhood they represent. Therefore, members of the group are (75/13) RR, (13) Ena, (13) LB, (86) AR, (86) Spook, (86) DjaDja, (87) ArraMG, (87) AR, (87) KL, (87) SK87, (75) Joseph de Derde, DT and KV Savage. Although drillers of EDG are, therefore, representing neighbourhoods across and out of the city, their music videos are often recorded in the city centre and they often lyrically refer to being in the city centre. Hence, for the purpose of this thesis, they are incorporated in this city district. Central symbolic themes that are averagely used more than other drill groups are predominantly centred around violence, such as the symbolic communication of physical assaults and stabbings. Unsurprisingly, EDG is therefore one of the most popular drill groups in the Amsterdam drill scene.