

When Words Fail, Music Speaks

Michael Cameron

What is this presentation ?



About me

Me listening to songs about selling drugs and killing people on my way to a regular 9-5 job



What is this presentation ?

- I interviewed young people (12-17) in Out of Home Care who also use drugs and alcohol, about how they derive meaning from music.
- Ill show you some music they showed me.
- Ill show you some things they said to me.
- Ill talk about what implications this may have on practice.

How the project came about



Rap Music Glorifying Drug Use

By Robert Preidt

2 April 2008, 23:09 • 3 min read

Calls for drill music to be BANNED as OneFour rapper YP is freed from jail

RATED E

What Kind of Mom Lets Her Kids Listen to Explicit Songs?

Rappers promote a destructive hype culture

By Eder Ramirez Nov 30, 2021 0

Inside the terrifying new 'drill gangs' obsessed with rap music and gun culture feuding over postcodes in the suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney

How the project came about

We often turned this music off and asked young people to turn it down

We said it:

- Promoted drug use
- Promoted violence
- Glorified a negative life style
- Influenced young people due to their susceptibility
- Triggered young people due to AOD related content



SO I STARTED DOING SOME RESEARCH

been crying my eyes out to this the last few days, ima go rehab n get my shit together, ur music gives me the will to stay alive <3

 88  [REPLY](#)

▼ [View 14 replies](#)

Brought a tear to my eye, kerser's helped me with the codeine, 1 year clean next month

 481  [REPLY](#)

▼ [View 31 replies](#)

Just now finding this. Damn this hits hard. Everyday I battle with these thoughts and emotions. Respect for keeping it so real and transparent.
Thank you

 7  [REPLY](#)

This song is saving my life right now.

 290  [REPLY](#)

▼ [View 27 replies](#)

SO I STARTED DOING SOME RESEARCH

- It didn't make sense to me. We were against this music in clinics, community, clinical session and groups. But the music continued to be played all the time and young people stood by it passionately.
- It created constant conflict between young people and workers
- So I decided to find out 'does rap music about AOD promote or glorify substance use?'

WHAT DID I DO?

- I spoke with young people about their music choices
- I listened and I didn't judge
- I asked them to show me songs and explain why they were meaningful

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS

Sometimes, I had to accept the jarring nature, swear words, violence and drug use in the songs. I had to listen deeper than face value.

This principal is actually consistent with how we work with clients:

- Listen past the facade
- Look for functions and deeper meanings
- What isn't being said or being implied ?
- What does their presentation tell me about them as a person?
- Harm minimisation – if they are choosing to engage with this music, then I must choose to engage with it. I cant simply say 'no'

One of many notable songs



Comments on this song alone

This is literally an illustration of the inner battle a lot of men face on a daily basis.
Pretty sure we can almost all relate to this

 985  [REPLY](#)

▼ [View 9 replies](#)

Given my current battle, couldn't have found this track at a better time. Feeling like you're crazy arguing with yourself & mixed thoughts & emotions in your head. Stay up Kings & Queens. Can't give up now after making it this far. 🙌👊

 22  [REPLY](#)




▼ [View reply](#)

2022 and still playing this during those tough times

 2.4K  [REPLY](#)

▼ [View 66 replies](#)

Relate more than I'd like to admit.. good song mate it's helping me through some shit now. Keep it up

 154   [REPLY](#)

▼ [View reply](#)

Other notable songs

- All of the songs young people showed me were like this
- They all had themes of AOD, mental health and trauma
- They all said this music had helped them more than anything they have done in session with workers.

Responses from participants

- *“I’ve smoked cones every day since I was like fucking 10. My whole family does, all my friends do, everyone I know fucking does. I’ve been around this shit since before I could walk. But now because someone talks about it, but makes the words rhyme, its all of a sudden gonna make me use?”*
- *“I think people compare us to their own kids and shit who have all come from their nice lives. Like I’ve seen it with like real rich kids you know, where like, they are the ones listening to the music, hearing drugs and thinking ‘fuck yeah that’s cool’. But for us who have been through it, it’s not like that, so we take it seriously you know? It’s not like it is for other people.”*
- *“ People who say, oh don’t listen to that or whatever, like life doesn’t revolve around drugs. And it’s like mate, for me it does, like my life is drugs”*

Workers and music

- *“Well it’s just like being judged really. When the music is actually personal to you and its talking about like drugs or crime or sex or something, and then a worker is telling you to turn it off, it almost feel like they are saying it about you.”*
- *“ I think the workers freak out too much about it, there is so much more happening in my life that makes me want to use drugs more than music does”*
- *“The fact I got moved to a resi where there are more drugs then I have ever been around in my whole life says how fucking backwards it is. My whole life has more shit going on with drugs than my music does. It’s just better hearing about it from a rapper than some worker who goes home when their shift is over”*

Key conceptual frameworks

- *Cultural competency – music is young peoples culture*
- *Emotional regulation – music helped young people manage emotion*
- *Teaching – Young people learned lesson from music*
- *Deterring drug use – Young people used music for motivations not to use*
- *Lived experience*

So what can we do?

- *Ask your clients to show you music. Ask them why they like it and why its important*
- *Have an open mind, listen beyond the first impression*
- *Take a harm minimisation approach. If its here regardless of my opinion on it, how can I work with it?*
- *Use it for emotional regulation in session*

So what can we do?

Incorporate it into support planning

‘listen to music’ should not suffice for regulation and safety plans

We want to know:

- *When I'm said I listen to : (songs and artists)*
- *When I'm happy I listen to : (songs and artists)*
- *I like listening to music when (headphones, walks, in groups etc.)*
- *I like these songs because:*

What more needs to be done?

- *We need to speak directly to the workforce*
- *More conversations with young people*
- *More conversations with rappers in Australia about their influence*

Songs to go away and listen to

Complete – Jordan, Vapour of darkness

360 – I'm sorry, Real friends

Kerser – Bad habits, Thankyou

Huskii – Old me part 1 and 2, Stress