



RAYS

Reconnecting Albanian Youth and Society

Working Paper #4

# Music for Futures Lyrics and Beats Making Workshop

Cultivating resilience to organised crime in Albanian youth through music.





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# Music for Futures - Lyrics and Beats Making Workshop

Cultivating resilience to organised crime  
in Albanian youth through music.

Dr Mark Berry

Bournemouth - Tirana, March 2023

## Editorial matters

RAYS is a UK-government funded pilot programme led by Palladium International, which supports young Albanian people who are at risk of, or already involved in, serious organized crime (SOC), to divert their life choices away from SOC towards pathways resilient to exploitation. The partners, including Bournemouth University (research), the Centre for Sustainable Criminal Justice (institutional collaborations), and the Child Rights Centre Albania, work together with young people in Albania, their communities and relevant institutions, to build equitable and constructive partnerships.

The overarching aim is to generate a better understanding of the drivers of youth engagement in SOC, boost alternative pathways, contribute to building a more inclusive society in Albania, and ultimately disrupt SOC groups' influence on young people in Albania.

The Centre for Seldom Heard Voices, Bournemouth University, brings together academics in the fields of criminology, social anthropology and other social sciences as well as social work to engage with marginalised and often stigmatised communities and to amplify often excluded or silenced voices. The research centre holds a strong track record of developing collaborative partnerships with communities and key stakeholders, and for using participatory and co-created approaches. Its aim is to apply scholarly research to real-world challenges to maximise societal impact, both at home and abroad.

Disclaimer: This document was made possible with the support of 'Reconnecting Albanian Youth and Society' RAYS Project. Any opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the project and the UK Government.

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The song gives a call to all adolescents that not only should they continue forward with their life the way that they want to, but also to look at the world in a different way -  
Male participant Kukës

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Music for Futures - lyrics and beats making workshop employed a series of sessions in which young people learned to critically evaluate rap lyrics, craft their own lyrics, and apply them to 'beats' of their creation. The intervention was a first in Albania but also employed innovative methods that have not been used previously in other academic interventions of this kind throughout the world. The project provided a music-based platform for young people to express their lived experiences and learn social, practical and critical thinking skills, whilst envisaging and working towards constructive futures for both themselves and broader Albanian society. The workshop is a form of participatory action research (see appendix for full discussion of PAR) that builds upon the previous research and activities conducted by the BU-RAYS team. It is informed by the developing 'FAM-strategy', (Schwandner-Sievers 2022), the learning and recommendations from an internal 'Hip-hop Report' (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022), a forthcoming working paper on music elicitation as a research tool (Levell 2023) and preceding focus group research in the target area (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023). The application of the FAM-strategy (Schwandner-Sievers 2022) aims to document and trigger cognitive change by generating creative, new 'ways of seeing' (Berger 1972) through participatory arts. Critical literacy was useful here as it involved the analysis of texts (lyrics) to uncover relationships between power and language whilst encouraging participatory social action. The executive summary provides an evaluation of the key findings of this study.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The intervention was delivered in two Albanian cities: 1) Kukës and, 2) Shkoder. The participants were aged between 12-16 years; however, the majority were aged between 14-16 years. In Kukës, there were 13 young people participated in this study. There was a near-equal split between genders: boys (n=6) and girls (n=7). In Shkoder there were 20 participants; girls (n=13) and boys (n=7). The intervention was fully approved by the Bournemouth University Ethics Committee. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was gained from each of the participants. All data was anonymised. Two Albanian-speaking research assistants were trained and provided support in the delivery of the workshop.

### Programme implementation

- 1. Pre-pulse (FAM-concept):** Young people were asked to discuss a piece of rap music that they could relate to and that reflected their lived experiences. They were then asked to discuss why they chose this music and what meaning it had to them, using music elicitation techniques.
- 2. Lyrics analysis:** young people were given guidance on how to analyse rap music using a loose framework of themes identified in the FAM-Strategy.



3. **Lyrics writing:** young people were mentored in lyrics writing and asked to write content that relates to their lived experiences.
4. **Beat making:** young people were tutored on how to produce music, and how to create a short track, to which they were then able to record their lyrics.
5. **Exhibition of work:** young people were asked to share the music they created with the group.
6. **Post pulse (FAM-concept):** young people were asked to reflect upon their work (in conjunction with exhibiting it) and the workshop, and to provide feedback.

The FAM-strategy is a theoretical model developed to trace, document, analyse, and develop intervention techniques which systematically utilise the transformative potentials of participatory arts-based activities with young people and those working with them. 'FAM' is an abbreviation for 'familiarisation' and 'defamiliarisation' techniques known across the arts and in arts-based pedagogies. These are also known in academic disciplines such as philosophy and anthropology to foster creative, critical, lateral, and imaginative thinking that challenges normalised, cultural perceptions and ways of being; and applied in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to first recognising and then changing, established (previously taken-for-granted) thinking and behaviour. 'Familiarisation' techniques, by 'making the strange familiar', facilitate engagement and understanding across established social and symbolic boundaries of exclusion and difference in society (e.g. across age, social class, or gender division as culturally-situated and defined). 'Defamiliarisation' techniques, by 'making the familiar strange', encourage critical recognition of taken-for-granted, normalised ways of thinking, of situations and of identities as a first step towards participants becoming agents for change. (Schwandner-Sievers 2022b).

## FINDINGS

The following section outlines the main findings from the workshop, summarising data gathered from each of the sessions, as well as the pre-pulse and post-pulse phases. Concurrent themes of 'adversity, resilience and change' emerged through each of the sessions. These themes were expressed either verbally in discussions or in the lyrics young people wrote and performed: 1) Adversity: relates to adverse childhood experiences (ACE) alongside broader social and structural problems in Albania that impact upon young people. 2) Resilience: refers to overcoming these difficulties and hardships in life. 3) Change: refers to constructive transformations, such as by changing individual behaviours or envisaging and working towards constructive futures. The themes of adversity, resilience and change are interrelated and were expressed by young people through what has been termed here as 'resilience narratives'. These narratives encapsulated a number of subthemes which have been summarised below. The subthemes also relate to, and are mirrored within, the 'Guiding Themes' which had emerged from the Hip-hop Report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022) and the preceding focus group research (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023).

## ADVERSITY, RESILIENCE AND CHANGE

Resilience psychology is an emerging field that seeks to identify the mechanisms which help strengthen an individual's resolve in times of adversity. This also has relevance for interventions that seek to prevent serious and organised crime (by helping to strengthen individuals and communities, so they become more resilient to criminality). There are a number of social and psychological 'protective factors' that promote effective coping with adversity, which can help explain why some people are more resilient than others (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Lyrics-based interventions may enhance this process by enabling young people to express their thoughts, and emotions, whilst gaining social, practical and critical thinking skills; alongside facilitating participatory social action. Indeed, the FAM-strategy's emphasis on developing creative and critical thinking skills (further developed here through concepts from critical literacy), can help young people think through structural, social and institutional injustices, whilst considering ways to resolve them; thus, becoming more resilient to these issues. Experiences of adversity were common to the participants throughout the sessions; however, there was a strong emphasis on resilience in overcoming them and constructive transformation in their narratives. In doing so they exhibited a desire to be agents of change rather than victims of adversity (Cyrulnik 2009).

## MOTIVATION

Some young people found that music gave them mental and emotional energy with songs that helped them to shift their mindset and become more self-confident and driven. Music helped the participants to overcome both internal psychological and external sociocultural barriers to performance in addition to providing them with motivational energy to take on new activities. It has also

I chose the song The Weeknd – Save Your Tears. I like it because it is a song that makes you feel very free, to dance, to sing, without any complexes - Female participant Kukës

been shown that listening to music can elicit particular moods, feelings, and mental states that are beneficial for therapeutic purposes, which was also highlighted in the data. These findings are supported by studies on the motivational effects of music in sports (Karageorghis and Priest 2012).

## LOVE AND LOSS

The themes of love and loss were present in all stages of the intervention (most specifically in lyrics analysis and lyrics writing). There was a gendered divide here with solely girls who expressed this in the pre-pulse and lyrics analysis sessions; however, there was a slight shift during the lyrics writing phase. The distinctions between genres of music and modes of expression are likely linked to patriarchal traditions that affect how people perceive the roles of women and men in Albanian society. In terms of romance, many young people encounter unhealthy and dysfunctional relationships as they learn how to navigate love for the first time (Davila et al. 2016). Structural problems in society like poverty and inequality can have a detrimental effect and exacerbate the problems young people have with love. It is crucial to determine strategies that encourage healthy relationships among young people and address the structural problems that have a negative influence on them (Hielscher et al. 2021). However, not all of the young people expressed sentiments of love and loss, and those who did showed themes of resilience in overcoming the latter of the two. These themes also relate to findings from our FGD Report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023) whereby young people frequently talked about the need for belonging and acceptance in Albanian society.

The themes of love and loss were not restricted exclusively to romantic relationships and also extended to close friendships and familial ones. Developing and maintaining friendships is one of life's most significant accomplishments for young people and these relationships are essential to their cognitive, emotional and social development. These friendships can be especially strong, which can cause profound sadness and pain when they end. This is also the case with severed familial bonds, which are often more traumatic. With experiences such as these, young people often find it difficult to convey sensitive emotions that result from them. Nonetheless, the lyrics writing sessions helped them to express themselves more freely. Indeed, talking or writing about challenging experiences is a crucial first step in trying to resolve the feelings and consequences associated.

A sleepless night again. In my bedroom. A rocket and some propane. Into space I zoom. Zoom zoom zoom. Just like the moon. You spin around my head. Too many stars out there. But there's only one sun. And it is you (lyrics) - Male participant Shkoder

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

The participants frequently discussed the importance of social support in relation to overcoming adversity. Evidence in this field demonstrates that positive social bonds with family members and peers are one of the key protective factors that boost resilience (Walsh 2016). Aside from the psychological advantages of this, strong social connections may foster forms

I chose the song of Billie Eilish – Everything I wanted. I like it as a song because it's a bit relaxing, I listen to it all the time. The part that I liked the most is: "As long as I'm here, no one can hurt you" (song lyrics). -Female participant Shkoder

of social control that promote pro-social behaviour. This can occur through personal ties or through civic engagement with institutions such as in education, the workplace or through music interventions such as this. Constructive family relations and community support can reduce disorders of mental health in childhood and reduce the likelihood of committing crimes.

## SOCIAL ALIENATION

The theme of social alienation emerged in both the pre-pulse and the lyrics analysis sessions. The participants discussed the experiences of alienation for Albanian youth alongside the related feelings of sadness and despair. Social alienation refers to feelings and experiences of being separated and isolated from one's friends, family, community, or larger society. It also entails a break from accepted norms and values and may be brought about by a number of social, structural, or economic factors. Social alienation can result in emotions of despair, self-loathing, loneliness, and emptiness, alongside cultural and social hostility (Zolfaghari and Ashayeri 2021). The music sessions enabled young people to express the emotional difficulties related to alienation they experience in life and think more critically about them. Importantly, as before, they articulated the advantages of social support in providing resilience to overcome the effects of this.

I chose the song that I mentioned earlier Runaway by TXT....The message is the strong adolescent emotions, such as sadness, despair, love, everything that an adolescent experiences throughout school, throughout life. It mainly talks about despair and how you feel tired with the lifestyle that you have, and the whole song is runaway, meaning to get away from the monotony together with your true friends - Male participant Kukës

## POVERTY AND CORRUPTION

Another set of important themes that emerged were that of poverty and corruption. Albania is rated as the 5th poorest country in Europe with a significant proportion of the population living in poverty (World Population Review 2022). Experiences of poverty are common to youth that are at risk of engagement in organised crime; it is a key risk factor for criminality. The young people expressed experiences of poverty but also, importantly, in having the strength in overcoming this and achieve their goals in life. Albania also has a serious problem with corruption, which is systemic and occurs at all levels of society. Corruption and organised crime are symbiotic processes and the two are closely linked. Moreover, corruption can cause poverty as governments are not able to leverage the resources needed to support society (Dimant and Tosato 2018). In the lyrics analysis sessions, the young people were able to think critically about corruption and the negative effects it has on society. Indeed, the effects of corruption were felt deeply by the participants, which was also reflected in their lyrics.

They're telling me to rap, I don't know where I should start. Corruption is killing us wherever we go. The second one doesn't ask the first one anymore. And the fight starts. Why did you look at me? No but he cursed you. Poverty is killing us. And with poverty you have no freedom of speech because the one who has Lek is buying everything with money (lyrics)... - Male participant Shkoder

## GENDER INEQUALITY, BULLYING AND RESILIENCE

In both the lyrics analysis and lyrics writing phases, the young people expressed the topic of bullying and being negatively judged by others; this related to face-to-face experiences as well as cyberbullying through online interactions on social media (Xu et al. 2012). There was also a gendered dimension in this, specifically in the lyrics writing sessions. For example, a female participant discussed a song which promoted a message of strength to all bullied and abused females. This also mirrors themes around domestic violence that were identified in our focus group report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023) and relates to entrenched Albanian patriarchal values. Some of the girls also aligned with these stereotypes, as was evident in responses during the lyrics analysis session; demonstrating the need for greater work here. People who have experienced bullying or domestic abuse are more prone to have mental health problems including anxiety and depression. They may find it difficult to form constructive relationships and may withdraw from education or the workplace. Nonetheless, through the sessions, the young people were able to express these issues as well as provide messages of hope, support and resilience to others who are experiencing them.

I can see you're sad, even when you smile, even when you laugh. I can see it in your eyes, deep inside you want to cry. Baby I just wanna tell you to be yourself. Just keep it smile, cuz you know no one will ever care. I will be there for you anytime you want. I just hope you'll love yourself like you did before... - Group lyrics Kukës

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In Kukës, an important theme that emerged was that of environmental sustainability. Environmental problems such as global warming, deforestation and pollution have had a significant negative influence on modern civilization. As governments are not moving rapidly enough to address these problems, scientists have warned that they will only become worse and that some of the impacts may be irreversible (Solomon et al. 2009). This will have a greater effect on young people as they grow older, and the process accelerates. The participants found it useful to be able to discuss these issues and express their concerns during the workshop. Indeed, music interventions can provide a platform to engage young people in debates about climate change and help amplify their voice on the effects it is having upon them. This may also lead them to actively engage in this field more broadly.

...[O]ne of them which I chose is Michael Jackson – Earth Song. It talks about the earth and disasters that happen in earth, and that humanity should become better, or that it should protect our earth and the living that are on it, and humans, etc - Male participant Kukës

## CRIME

Narratives around the theme of crime were also present in the sessions. Some young people expressed negative opinions of crime in their community as well as the way crime is promoted in popular rap music. The

I chose a singer from Sweden whose name is Haval, and the reason why I chose it is because it talks about the streets, how to get away from criminal paths - Male participant Shkoder

workshop enabled them to promote messages of resilience, hope and change in the context of social problems. Comparatively, a small number of participants expressed an affinity to criminal content in their choice of music and also the lyrics that they wrote. This theme was expressed more often by participants in Shkoder than in Kukës, which may reflect its greater population size, larger urban areas and higher levels of internal migration. In regard to the young people with an affinity to more 'gangsta' rap styles of music, these participants presented themselves as the most unruly in class and some had come from difficult backgrounds. Nonetheless, they were still able to think critically about problems in society through the tasks that were set for them. This demonstrates that these interventions can connect with disaffected youth who are at the most risk of organised crime.

## CONCLUSION

The workshop was highly successful in meeting the aims of the intervention and was very popular with the participants. It provided a safe and welcoming space, where at-risk youth could participate in enjoyable activities that were aligned with their interests and, ultimately, have their voice heard. The sessions also helped practitioners to connect with these young people, which is key to reducing crime. The participants demonstrated the development of critical thinking skills about the causes of crime and how it negatively affected them. Importantly, they discussed how they thought these issues could be resolved and demonstrated resilience against crime and other adverse experiences. The young people were also able to consider broader issues like environmental sustainability along with social and structural problems like poverty and corruption. There were signs that these critical thinking skills went beyond music and could be applied to many different textual mediums, including books, political commentary, and various forms of media. This has important ramifications for promoting participatory social action which may help to address structural inequalities and injustices in society. In addition to critical thinking, these sessions clearly demonstrated how participants improved their social and practical skills. These include writing and reading comprehension, public speaking, teamwork, software proficiency, music production skills, and music analysis among others. Unfortunately, there is a severe lack of recreational activities in Albania. This highlights the necessity of creating long-term sustainable initiatives of this kind for the future.

...[I]t was the most beautiful experience that I have experienced to tell you the truth. Because it is related to my field, my craft, music. I thank you so much as well, these days that you have supported me.... And just, I had so much fun, and as I was saying, if it only could have lasted longer.

Male participant Kukës

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

### **1: FACILITATE TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN LYRICS AND BEAT MAKING WORKSHOPS TO YOUTH WORK PROFESSIONALS AND EDUCATORS.**

The lyrics and beat-making intervention demonstrated significant benefits in connecting with at-risk youth whilst helping them to express themselves and think critically through music. It allowed them to constructively think towards their futures and aspirations, as well as how to resolve the social and structural problems in their society. The sessions provided a platform where they could open up and express sensitive experiences in a safe and welcoming environment that was attuned to their interests and sensibilities. In light of this, this intervention has significant potential for helping at-risk youth more widely throughout Albania and elsewhere in the world. It is, therefore, recommended that the lyrics and beat-making workshops are piloted as a training tool for youth work professionals and educators, so they can be delivered more broadly. This would require face-to-face sessions to better develop their professional capacities and skills. These sessions would be provided alongside practical trainers manuals/toolkits to help make the intervention more sustainable on a long-term basis.

### **2: PILOT THE LYRICS AND BEATS MAKING INTERVENTION WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.**

The intervention has only been applied to at-risk youth but could be expanded to young offenders serving time for criminal offences. Indeed, the intervention has significant potential for working with young offenders to help reduce recidivism in the community. The workshop empowered young people to strengthen their resilience to adverse experiences and crime. It provided a music-based platform where they could build self-esteem and envisage constructive futures and pro-social pathways in life. It is essential not only to tackle entry into criminal markets but also to divert those who already have involvement within it. This would provide substantial social and economic benefits for society. In light of this, it is recommended that this intervention be piloted with young offenders in the prison setting and also those who are on probation serving community sentences. Doing so, would not only help to reduce involvement in serious and organised crime but also to develop role models for other young people who are at risk of offending.

### **3: EXPAND THE FAM-STRATEGY TO INCLUDE OTHER ARTS AND/OR SPORTS-BASED INTERVENTIONS.**

Through the application of the FAM-strategy, and critical literacy, the workshop demonstrated the development of critical thinking skills that can help to resolve the factors that facilitate crime as well as broader social and structural problems. Indeed,

the worksheet promoted young people to think about potential solutions to these issues. There were indications that these critical thinking skills extended past music to a variety of textual and verbal content, which has significant implications in encouraging participatory social action to resolve inequalities and injustices. Whilst the lyrics and beat-making workshops provided an excellent tool to facilitate these skills, there is potential for the FAM-strategy to be expanded to other visual and audio arts or sports-based interventions to widen its scope and impact.

#### **4: CONSIDER THE APPLICATION OF RESILIENCE THEORY IN OTHER INTERVENTIONS WITH AT-RISK INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES.**

A key factor in reducing serious and organised crime is by empowering individuals and their communities to become resilient to it. Resilience theory is an emerging field that has roots in psychology but also has important implications for criminological interventions and the social sciences more generally. The young people in this study experienced adversity in childhood but demonstrated significant resilience and constructive transformation in overcoming these difficulties. The workshop helped to support this process through the participants' expression of 'resilience narratives' alongside the social, practical and critical thinking skills that they gained. Social and psychological 'protective factors' promote effective management of adverse experiences, which can explain why some people are more resilient to crime than others. It is essential that these are strengthened in at-risk individuals and social groups. There is significant potential to apply this concept further to help cultivate resilience to organised crime more broadly in Albanian society and elsewhere in the world.

#### **5. DISSEMINATE RESEARCH FINDINGS IN CONFERENCES AND ACADEMIC JOURNALS TO FACILITATE GREATER IMPACT.**

In addition to the impact these interventions are having on the ground, the benefits of this project can be furthered through the dissemination of the research findings in conferences and high-ranking academic journals. Academic journals are a preferred source of academic information due to the peer review process, in which experts evaluate them on their quality. As such, publication in academic journals ensures that these findings will be read by a broad audience of professionals who have an interest in this field. This will also support professionals looking to implement and develop interventions of this kind in the future; further supporting projects with the goal of reducing organised crime. Conferences also provide the opportunity to share knowledge, receive constructive critical feedback and gain new perspectives on the research findings. As such, it is recommended that the findings of this project are disseminated in academic journals and conferences among other mediums.



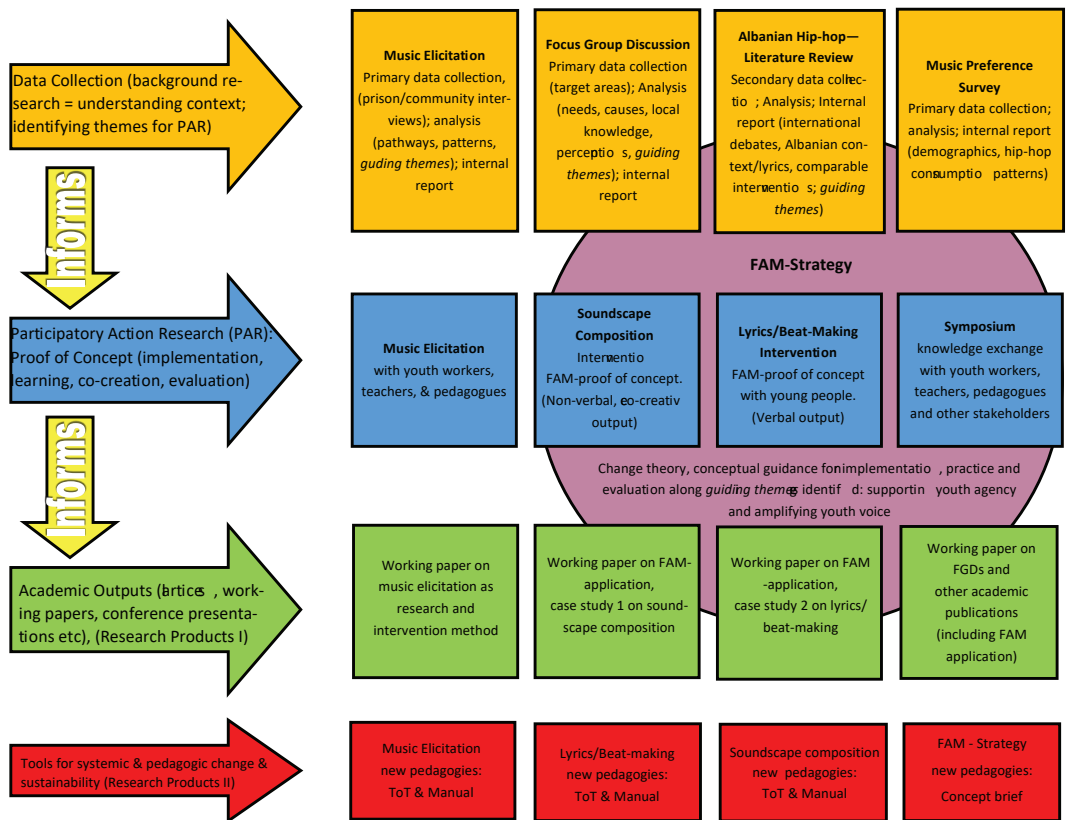
# 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The Music for Futures – Lyrics and Beat Making workshop employed a series of sessions in which young people learned to critically evaluate rap lyrics, craft their own lyrics, and apply them to 'beats' of their creation. Rap music interventions have significant benefits for working with at-risk youth and have been evidenced to increase engagement with the education system, provide a platform for self-expression, develop social and practical skills, cultivate self-esteem, social status, creative and critical thinking whilst allowing young people to envisage and work towards constructive futures. The workshop form of participatory action research (see appendix for a full discussion of PAR) that builds upon the previous research and activities conducted by the BU-RAYS team. Specifically, it is informed by the developing 'FAM-strategy' (Schwandner-Sievers 2022), the learning from and recommendations of the 'Hip-Hop report', specifically relating to participatory music-based interventions (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023), and music elicitation as a method or participatory action research (Levell 2023) and preceding focus group research in the target area which scoped local perceptions and concerns (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023). The primary aim of the intervention (RAYS, objective A) is to create sustainable music-based workshops that cultivate constructive 'attitudinal and behavioural change' in youth towards non-criminal futures. The application of the FAM-strategy aims to document and trigger cognitive change through generating creative, new 'ways of seeing' (Berger 1972) through participatory arts, here hip-hop lyrics and beats making.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Create music-based platforms to allow young people to express their lived experiences, critically evaluate their environments and develop social and practical skills.
2. Develop music-based interventions that allow young people to envisage and work towards constructive futures.
3. Cultivate critical thinking skills to allow young people to distinguish between Rap music as a form of art vs reality.
4. Build relations between youth, education, and practitioners.
5. Facilitate a sustainable future of music-based workshops that will outlast project life.

# OVERVIEW OF RAYS PARTICIPATORY ARTS (MUSIC) – BASED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES



©Schwandner-Sievers, S. & Sheppard, N.

# 4. METHODOLOGY

## PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Pre-pulse (FAM-concept):** Young people were asked to discuss a piece of rap music that they can relate to and reflected their lived experiences. They were then asked to discuss why they choose this music and what meaning it had to them, using music elicitation techniques.
2. **Lyrics analysis:** young people were given guidance on how to analyse rap music using a loose framework of themes identified in the FAM-strategy.
3. **Lyrics writing:** young people were mentored on lyrics writing and asked to write content that relates to their lived experiences.
4. **Beat making:** young people were tutored on how to produce music, and create a short track, to which they were then able to record their lyrics.
5. **Exhibition of work:** young people were asked to share the music they created with the group.
6. **Post pulse (FAM-concept):** young people were asked to reflect upon their work (in conjunction with exhibiting it) and the workshop, and to provide feedback.

## PARTICIPANTS

The intervention was delivered in two cities in Albania: 1) Kukës and 2) Shkoder. The participants were aged between 12-16 years; however, the majority were aged between 14-16 years. In Kukës, there were 13 young people who participated in this study. There was a near equal split between genders: boys (N=6) and girls (N=7). In Shkoder there were 20 participants; girls (N=13) and boys (N=7). The intervention was fully approved by the Bournemouth University Ethics Committee. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was gained from each of the participants. All data was anonymised. Two Albanian speaking research assistants were trained and provided support in the delivery of the workshops.

## PROJECT EVALUATION: CHECKING THE PULSE

To evaluate the impact the project has on young people in cultivating new ways of seeing and envisaging alternative futures, suitable measures needed to be put in place. In order to do this, it was necessary to gather information about these factors both before and after the intervention had taken place. In medical settings, researchers have physically checked the pulse of participants before exposing them to experimental conditions; the pulse can then be measured again after to determine the intervention's effect ('pre-pulse' and 'post-pulse'). For example, this process has been used to test the physiological effects of music therapy on anxiety (Fuson 2012). In the RAYS intervention, we refer to this process analogically as 'checking the pulse' and instead use innovative qualitative methods to measure change (Schwandner-Sievers 2022). The pre-pulse phase employed music elicitation as a platform for young people to express their lived experiences, attitudes and perspectives (Levell 2019). We invited participants to choose a rap song at the start of the session that they felt related to and reflected on their own experiences. We then asked them to discuss in groups the reasons why they chose the song to enable us to gain information on these personal factors. In the post-pulse phase, we used the young people's narrative reflections on their own work exhibited and discussed in the group, as well as interviewed them in groups on their perceptions of the workshop and the tasks that were set within it. This was done to see if they had developed, social practical and critical thinking skills within the sessions and enable us to identify changes in perspectives, perceptions and attitudes. We also asked the participants to discuss any strengths or weaknesses in the workshop which can be worked upon in the future. This is referred to elsewhere as participatory evaluation and empowers actors to have a stake in the evaluation process (Cousins and Earl 1992). It is important to note the music elicitation techniques were employed here in a group setting, which differs to the one-to-one methodology that is typically used. This demonstrates the wider applicability of this tool; however, participants may be less inclined to talk about sensitive experiences with others present. The following sections will now outline the sessions themselves, providing theoretical and empirical evidence for their suitability.

## LYRICS ANALYSIS

In the first session, young people were instructed on how to critically analyse the lyrics of a Rap song of their choice. This allowed them to develop a critical perspective on its meanings and content, and to become more capable of distinguishing rap lyrics as a social construction, and form of art, rather than an objective representation of reality. In order to do this, the intervention used a loose set of questions taken from the work of

McLaughlin and DeVogd 2004 (as referred to in Pescatore (2015)) on critical literacy. This also aligns with the concept, and goals, of defamiliarisation inherent within the FAM-Strategy (Schwandner-Sievers 2022). Each question was elaborated on with a bullet point below to guide the participant's thinking:

1. Whose viewpoint is expressed?
  - Is the author talking from their own point of view or are they expressing the opinion of someone else?
2. What does the author want us to think?
  - Every written text, whether it be a newspaper article, textbook or rap lyrics, will be written with a particular agenda. Indeed, lyrics are composed of messages with the purpose of influencing the listener in some way.
3. Are any voices missing, silenced, or discounted?
  - Texts are often presented from a particular point of view that may miss the perspective of others.
4. How might alternative perspectives be represented?
  - For example, if it is from a perspective of a man, what might it be from the perspective of a woman? Other examples could include, parents or children, citizens or the government, criminals or victims, teachers or students..... There may be many different perspectives on the same thing!
5. What action might you take on the basis of what you have learned?
  - By considering different perspectives, we may reveal problems in society that need to be resolved. This could be for individual people, communities, or institutions. It is important to consider what we can do to help resolve these issues.

Having answered these questions, we then asked the young people to discuss how the lyrics in the songs they had chosen related to specific Guiding Themes which had emerged from the Hip Hop report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022) and the preceding focus group research (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023). This enabled us to tailor questions that were relevant to the local cultural specificities and social concerns in society, Rap music more broadly, and the aims of the project overall.

1. Gender
  - Male, female and other genders
2. Family & friends
  - Relationships with family members or friends
3. Power and respect
  - success, money, reputation, violence, crime, being a VIP.
4. Resilience and Survival

- Overcoming adversity and hardship in life
5. Individual growth/change
    - identifying personal issues and taking steps towards improving the self
  6. Societal growth/change
    - identifying issues in the community/society and taking steps towards improvement

The first theme 'gender' was chosen to allow young people to think through the way in which gender is constructed within lyrics to highlight any inequalities that may be present. The second theme 'family and friends' relate to how artists tell stories of their personal social and familial relationships to uncover the dynamics within them. 'Power and respect' relates to mattering and social status, which may be accrued through economic capital, crime or legitimate means. The three themes 'resilience and survival', 'individual growth change', and 'societal growth change' are interrelated and refer to how adversity is overcome and how positive growth occurs within individuals and also society.

## LYRICS WRITING

After analysing the lyrics of well-known rap artists, and other genres of the participant's choice, the second session expanded on the first by giving young people the chance to compose their own songs. While the first session focused on critical literacy principles, the second taught participants the art and science of MCing in practice (Edwards 2009). It aimed to provide knowledge to young people about the methods and approaches utilised to write powerful and interesting rap songs. While doing so, it also gave them a platform to share their real-life experiences, foster critical discourses using the techniques learned in session one, and envision positive futures they can work toward realising (heroes journey; see: Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022).

Participants were provided with a worksheet (see appendix) on how to write lyrics drawing upon the work of Edwards (2009). The worksheet first covered the types of content in rap lyrics that were relevant to the aims of the study. For example, 'real life' content relates to the telling of life stories. Participants were made aware that these are never true representations but are social constructions which may be exaggerated for literary effect. As Ilan (2020) states in his analysis of drill music, rap lyrics should not be taken literally and often contain hyperbole. The young people were also made aware that lyrics are often written in story form that contains a plot. The remainder of the session concentrated on the style of writing itself, such as the flow and tempo of the lyrics, and the way in which rhymes are created through similes, metaphor, alliteration, and consonance. This was done using examples from Albanian rap songs rather than English/American Hip-Hop. An English worksheet was also created to assist the instructor in the delivery. Participants were then asked to write their own lyrics drawing upon their lived experiences in Albania. In line with the Fam-strategy, they were also instructed to think about the perspectives of others in the creation of their lyrics.

## BEATS MAKING: MUSIC PRODUCTION SESSION

In the third session, young people were mentored in the foundations of music production to enable them to make their own 'beats' and apply the lyrics they have developed in

session two to them. This session aimed to build significant social and practical (digital) skills as young people learned the software required to produce music. In order to resolve the digital divide, the intervention employed freely available smartphone software to produce music. The digital divide refers to the gap between the people who have access to digital technologies and those that do not. This relates to hardware, software and also the internet. Information Communications Technologies (ICTs) are pivotal to the functioning of contemporary societies both in terms of infrastructure and economic capacities, with recently emerging 'smart cities' being exemplars of this (Berry 2018). Typically, it is those who are in situations of poverty that have the least access to digital technologies, which can limit their capacity to engage in society and progress in work and education. Simultaneously, in societies such as Albania, digital literacy is often marked by a generational divide (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023).

Albania is rated as the 5th poorest country in Europe (World Population Review 2022), with a significant proportion of the population living in poverty. Although work is underway to improve Albania's digital infrastructure (particularly in terms of internet access) the digital divide in rural and urban areas remains high, with rural areas being the worst affected. 'Key reasons for the persistent digital divide are lack of infrastructure and lack of institutional capacities, but also affordability' (Ministria E Infrastruktures 2020, p.6). The rural-urban gap also creates social inequalities and internal structures of exclusion between those from the city and others who live in, or migrate from, poorer rural areas (Schwandner-Sievers 2022a). Typically, music production interventions with youth have involved the usage of music studios, which can be costly. This may be suitable in western countries that are economically more developed, however, countries that have lower GDP and heightened levels of poverty may not be able to afford the hardware for music studios in their institutions. Indeed, focus group discussions with Albanian stakeholders in Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan revealed that there were limited recreational arts, music and sports-based activities available for youth which related to deficiencies in appropriate infrastructure (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023). To resolve this issue, it was necessary to devise an intervention that could be implemented without the need for expensive equipment.

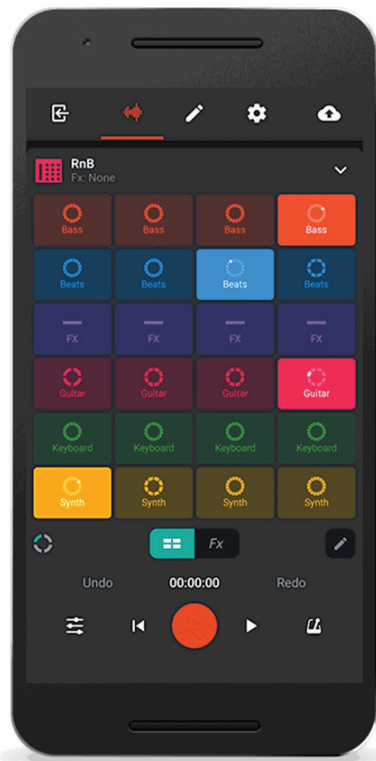
Advances in music software have enabled people to produce music without the need for expensive hardware. This has now progressed to the extent that music sequencers are now available on smartphones; some of which are completely free to use. Informal discussion with stakeholders revealed that whilst some Albanian youth may not have access to a pc or laptop, most were said to own a smartphone (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023) In light of this, it was decided that the music production element of the intervention employs freely available smartphone software (BandLab) to resolve issues inherent in the digital divide and make the project sustainable in the long term. To date, this is the first academic beats-making intervention to employ freely available smartphone software in the world.

In the workshop, the young people were first given a tutorial on how to use the 'looper' function in BandLab. We decided to show them this tool first as it provides users with ready-made loops (melodies of a variety of instruments) that young people can use and adapt to create songs very quickly. Given the short duration of the workshop, this was essential. The looper contains a library of loops of different genres that can be used in any track; this includes drums as well other physical and virtual instruments. Following this, the young people were given a tutorial on how to make loops of their own, enabling them to create entirely original songs from scratch. The final tutorial instructed participants

on how to record the lyrics to the songs they created. Once this was done, they were allowed to take turns using an empty room for recording purposes. Some young people worked together in groups writing lyrics and producing their songs. Participants were provided with headphones so they could produce music without disturbing other members of the group.

## EXHIBITION OF WORK

In the final practical session of the workshop, young people were asked to play the tracks they had composed to the group and received appropriate feedback. Not only did this allow them to share the music they had composed but also their own personal stories which have been narrated in lyrical form; this is a group component of 'self-disclosure' which is key in therapeutic practices (Olson-McBride and Page 2012). Moreover, these tracks also provide outputs which can be shared with the community online or in other mediums. This effectively amplifies the voice of this marginalised group with the potential of having broader impacts on society, facilitating social, institutional, and structural change. Such goals are inherent within critical literacy approaches (outlined later) that attempt to resolve social inequalities and injustices for marginalised groups (Coffey 2008; Lavouille 2019). This part of the activity simultaneously introduced the post-pulse: narrative reflections and discussion were recorded in addition to the administration of evaluative questionnaires at the very end of the workshop.



BandLab looper function



# 5. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the theoretical framework which was integrated with the FAM-strategy to provide the conceptual basis of the study. It also outlines empirical evidence around the benefits of similar music interventions while demonstrating how this study both builds upon them and differs from them, in significant and important ways. This section begins by discussing the R.E.S model:

## THE R.E.S MODEL

The R.E.S model was originally designed as a form of poetry therapy providing an alternative means for clinicians to work with their clients in group settings. This also includes children in educational contexts (Maki and Mazza 2004). Building upon the work of (Olson-McBride and Page 2012), the intervention employed an adapted version of Mazza's framework (Mazza 2003). The R.E.S. model has three specific stages:

1. Receptive/prescriptive
  - introducing a poem, song or story in a therapeutic or educational context.
2. Expressive/creative
  - Creative expression through writing (stories, poetry, songs) in a therapeutic or educational context.
3. Symbolic/ceremonial
  - The use of metaphors, storytelling and performance in a therapeutic or educational context.

R.E.S facilitates self-expression and self-disclosure, the latter of which involves making oneself knowable to other people 'whom information about the self is communicated' (Jourard and Lasakow 1958, p.91) and is key to the therapeutic process. Olson-McBride and Page (2012) employed this framework with 'high risk' youths utilizing rap music as a vehicle of expression to facilitate change. Indeed, Hip-Hop is a form of poetry in musical form (Caplan 2014). Olson-McBride and Page first asked young people to choose a piece of rap music that was important to them, which would be discussed in groups. They then had them write lyrical poems either individually or in groups before reading the poems back to each other, completing the three components of the R.E.S. framework.

Nonetheless, there are limitations in the Olson-McBride and Page (2012) intervention. Indeed, the first step involved choosing music that was meaningful to participants in ways that related to their own experiences. This allowed them to reflect upon the lyrics as well as their own lives and discuss difficult and traumatic experiences with the group

(music elicitation). Although our intervention draws upon this work, this component was not designed to develop critical thinking skills around the music itself, which is important in cases of controversial or contentious content. Secondly, the poetry writing session is limited in its mode of expression; music is also known for its ability to express emotions and stories through sound as well as lyrics (Weninger et al. 2013). Music production is also popular with young people, which can increase engagement and develop practical and social skills; this was not included in their project. It is important to note, that the RAYS project is not a therapeutic intervention, but one which specifically is tailored toward preventing engagement and exploitation within serious and organised crime and supporting young people in entering alternative pathways.

## RESILIENCE THEORY

Psychological resilience (also known as mental toughness) is an interdisciplinary field with roots in psychology that has gained momentum in recent years. Research into resilience tries to assess the mechanisms that enable some people to cope in the face of stress, adversity, and trauma. This also has relevance for interventions that seek to prevent serious and organised crime (by helping to strengthen individuals and communities, so they become more resilient to criminal networks). Factors such as self-esteem, coping skills, decision-making skills, social solidarity and community support all have a role in resilience. Indeed, interventions that build resilience can help to protect people from engagement in crime in a number of ways:

1. Supports mechanisms that build self-esteem and self-worth: Resilience research seeks to identify and facilitate factors that enhance self-esteem in youth. Having a high sense of self-worth can help people to believe they can overcome obstacles and challenges (Davey et al. 2003; Niiya et al. 2004). As a result, people may be less susceptible to the pressure and coercion utilized by actors involved in serious and organised crime.
2. Helps people to develop coping skills: Emotional intelligence is a key mechanism in resilience that can help young people cope with conditions of adversity. 'Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify, express, and understand emotions; to incorporate emotions into thought; and to normalize both positive and negative emotions' (Niiya et al. 2004, p.101). The late teens is a period where young people are at significant risk of involvement in crime as they continue to mature socially and intellectually. Building emotional intelligence may help young people avoid risky behaviour during this time.
3. Facilitates problem-solving and decision-making skills: Resilience psychology seeks to identify factors that help individuals and their communities to make better decisions and resolve challenging problems in life. This can be achieved through developing self-efficacy and secure attachment. Self-efficacy is the belief people have in their ability to take the required actions to achieve particular goals. Whereas secure attachment is the belief that people have in receiving favourable responses from others. Both of these factors have been demonstrated to support better decision-making and problem-solving (Li et al. 2013). Improving these may help young people make better choices about whether they should get involved in crime and how to resolve situations where they may be coerced to do so.
4. Promotes social support networks and community bonds; Having meaningful interpersonal relationships and constructive community ties have been long

evidenced to improve psychological and physical health by making people more resilient to stress and trauma (Ozbay et al. 2007). Moreover, by facilitating meaningful relationships with non-criminal actors, such as friends, family members and the community, young people are less likely to learn values favourable to crime or have criminal opportunities made available to them. A strong sense of community can also make it difficult for criminals to operate in local areas (Skogan 1989).

## LYRICS ANALYSIS

Rap is an art form that conveys particular messages and stories that are grounded within specific, social and other structural contexts that influence its lyrical content and structure. Critical literacy can be useful here as it involves the analysis of texts to uncover relationships between power and language. It requires participants to uncover the underlying messages of texts, highlight biases within them, and examine their relationship to structural and social inequalities within the contexts in which they were written and/or describe (Bishop 2014). In doing so, workshop participants are better able to evaluate texts rather than taking them at face value.

Critical literacy can be applied to a variety of cultural products in written or spoken form. Indeed, Lavouille argues educators can apply critical literacy to rap music to examine relationships of power and inequality - 'Paired with hip-hop music, critical literacy helps participants examine real-world problems, such as socioeconomic status, race, class, and gender, as well as how and why some voices or discourses are excluded from texts' (LaVouille 2016, p.22).

She states that critical literacy has four components: 1) mainstream politics – problems and practices within the political system, 2) social justice- inequalities and injustices through state and non-state institutions, 3) multiple perspectives – acknowledging that there can be multiple points of view on the same subject and, 4) transformation – the ability to critically evaluate texts and with the goal of then working toward calling out, if not resolving, identified social inequalities, unjust acts and repressive conditions (ibid).

In regard to transformation, once participants develop a deeper understanding of the causes of problems within their communities and wider society, practitioners can encourage workshop participants to take part in social action to resolve problems, develop confident voices and hold politicians and others to account, if not themselves create alternatives to oppression and injustice. By formulating activities that facilitate dialogues about young people's needs, interests and experiences, educators can invite them to take part in larger community deliberations that attempt to solve problems in their area (Coffey 2008). Indeed, the 'Hip-Hop' report identified the 'heroes' journey' in the analysis of lyrics where artists told stories of achieving success in life despite adversity (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022). By cultivating critical discourses of society through music, envisaging constructive futures, and engaging in civic society to facilitate social and structural change, young people can positively contribute to wider society. These goals are inherent within the FAM-strategy which facilitates creative and critical thinking skills in youth (see box below).

It is important that young people are able to choose music styles of their choice as imposing genres such as Hip-Hop risks cultural appropriation, as such practitioners must develop culturally appropriate pedagogies which are relevant and support young

people's interests and backgrounds (Van Steenis 2020). Imposing unsuitable content also risks non-engagement and young people dropping out of interventions that they cannot connect with. Rap music has been criticised for its violent content that glamorises drugs, crime and misogyny against women; with some scholars suggesting the negative effects this could have on young people. Others have warned of any literal interpretations of hip-hop lyrics (Ilan 2020). In light of particularly the former, some interventions have opted for using conscientious styles of Hip-Hop (e.g. Tyson 2002). Yet not all rap music contains 'negative' content and often presents 'positive' stories of hope, success, and change. Moreover, there remains no clear causal link between rap music and crime; many young people listen to 'gangsta' styles of rap music and do not go on to internalise these values or exhibit these behaviours. Furthermore, the line between 'conscientious' and 'gansta' rap is not always clear – 'neither hip-hop artists nor songs can be neatly categorized as simply 'gangsta' or 'conscious' or 'positive' or 'negative' instead songs and messages are complex and the more seasoned listener/social worker can better use themes as reference points with clients' (Travis and Deepak 2011, p.216).

## LYRICS WRITING

Although the RAYS intervention is not focused on working with convicted offenders (but young people at risk of engagement and exploitation in crime), research in this area has important implications for this programme. Indeed, interventions consisting of lyrics writing and music production with young offenders have been shown to have clear benefits in fostering desistance from crime. For example, the youth offending team in the United Kingdom runs music-based workshops with young people to facilitate compliance with their community orders, engage with the education system and promote constructive change around their self-image (Bilby et al. 2013). The intervention presents an example of young offenders who previously wrote lyrics related to violent crime, robbery and drugs, which aligned with their identity at the time. Such content relates to young people trying to gain respect (Bourgois 2003), social status (Sandberg 2008) and matter within their communities (Billingham and Irwin-Rogers 2021) by aligning themselves with criminal networks, street codes and practices (Anderson 2019). Following these intervention activities, the young people involved stated that the programme had helped to 'open their minds' and become more positive which was also reflected in the lyrics they wrote (Bilby et al. 2013). Redefinition of self-image was paramount to this process, as young people developed alternative identities away from street life and crime. Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) study on desistance and identity exemplifies this process:

*'Offenders have "working selves" as criminal offenders with a set of preferences and social networks consistent with that self. In addition to the working self or the self in the present, there is a future, or possible, self that consists both of desires as to what the person wishes or hopes to become (the positive possible self) and anxiety over what they fear they may become (the feared self). Persons are committed to their working self until they determine that the cost of this commitment is greater than the benefits. A perception that one may in fact turn out to become the feared self... provides the initial motivation to change the self' (Paternoster and Bushway 2009, p.1103)*

Importantly, the conceptualisation of the self is expressed and internalised through autobiographical narratives which support the construction and maintenance of particular identities. These narratives affect future behaviour as people act in accordance with them (King 2013). When these narratives towards non-criminal futures are expressed through lyrics, it is plausible young people may begin to take steps toward the 'positive possible self'. Such findings are also mirrored in work on poetry therapy. According to a review of literature by Brilliantes-Evangelista (2013), poetry works through the use of metaphors which is crucial in the therapeutic functions of poetry writing interventions. Metaphors are symbols in which actors 'experience and understand the world' (p.74). They argue that it is through poetry that people can develop meaningful symbols of their experiences, 'let go' of past suffering and foster alternative perspectives of their lives; this can lead to self-reflection and self-management (ibid). Lyrics workshops also enable young people to develop skills around verbal expression. Indeed, research has found a significant correlation between a lack of proficiency in verbal expression and aggressive and delinquent behaviour as young people struggle to express their opinions and emotions. As such, rap is argued to be a significant tool in resolving this (Bruce and Davis 2000). Rap also gives voice to this marginalised group which can facilitate social change. As Becker famously argued, academics (and practitioners) must amplify the voice of the 'underdog' because their 'voice is least heard' (Becker 1966). This is all the more true for disaffected young people from marginalised backgrounds. The RAYS intervention thus aims to provide a music-based platform in which young people can cultivate positive narratives about the self and their visions of the future through lyrics, develop social and practical skills, and have their voices heard.

## BEATS MAKING

Music workshops cultivate confidence and self-esteem (Dowsett 2021), whilst empowering young people and their communities (Travis and Deepak 2011). Music production interventions also provide a platform in which young people's lived experiences can be disseminated to wider society through the cultural products that they produce. Indeed, music production workshops are evidenced to have positive effects on youth development. Van Steenis (2020) evaluated the benefits of a Hip-Hop music production intervention implemented by Horizon Youth Service (HYS) in San Francisco USA. This was founded upon 'positive youth development theory' which is a form of developmental psychology. Positive youth development (PYD) programmes are designed to support the development of at-risk youth from marginalised communities by improving 'physical, social, emotional, and cognitive/intellectual well-being' (Travis and Deepak 2011, p.204). They diverge from punitive correctional approaches that attempt to change what is deemed as bad behaviour and instead emphasise young people's strengths. This has similarly been described elsewhere as an 'asset-based approach' to rebuilding disaffected communities (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). At the core of PYD is the development of relations between young people and society - 'if young people have mutually beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social world, they will be on the way to a hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society. Young people will thrive' (Lerner et al. 2005, p.p11). PYD has been further developed in 'social justice youth development' pedagogies which shift the focus past the individual and acknowledge inequalities and injustices in society, whilst attempting to eliminate institutional obstacles (Camarota 2011; Iwasaki 2016; Van Steenis 2020); this aligns closely with critical literacy approaches outlined earlier.

The intervention developed by HYS provided young people with access to music studios in which they would be tutored on how to produce Hip-Hop. It aimed to provide young people with, 1) a welcoming and accessible safe space which focused on support and community inclusion, 2) agency within the creative process allowing young people freedom and responsibility in developing their own projects and, 3) connections to their social and political context by paying attention to and inviting conversations around ethnicity gender and socio-economic inequalities. The outcomes for the young people were positive demonstrating transformative behavioural and attitudinal change towards non-criminal futures. Nonetheless, based on their findings they recommended that programmes 1) implement culturally relevant pedagogies, 2) emphasise building relationships and, 3) foster agency, social and political development. These recommendations were taken forward in this workshop.

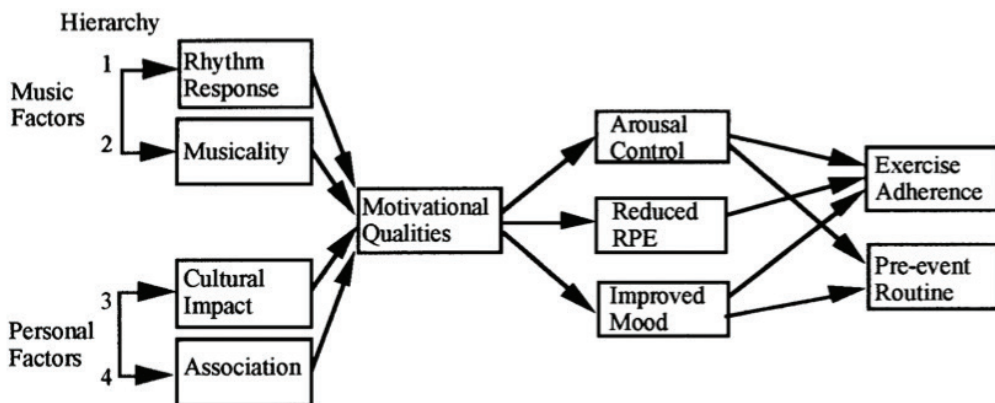
# 6. EVALUATION: PRE-PULSE

The following sections outline the findings from the pre-pulse discussions. In this session, responding to the music elicitation method applied, the young people chose a variety of songs across music genres. Some were Albanian Hip-Hop whereas others were western pop and even New Wave Japanese pop. The variety in genres reflects the different interests of young people across genders with some of the males having a more preference for rap music although not in all cases (for a breakdown of young Albanian music preferences, see: Hip-Hop report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022)). Interestingly, when describing why they chose the song and what meaning it had for them, the majority of the participants expressed how the lyrics related to having some form of resilience in their everyday lives in overcoming different forms of hardships. A number of participants also expressed how music provided them with motivation to overcome difficulties as well as to engage in new activities. The findings from these discussions have been broken down into the following themes:

## MOTIVATION

For some young people, music provided them with physical and psychological motivation whereby songs helped to change their mindset to become more confident and driven. These findings are mirrored in research done into the relationship between music and motivation in physical sports. A useful conceptual framework that can be applied to make sense of the motivational effects of music on young people in Albania comes from the work of Karageorghis, Terry, and Lane (1999). This framework consists of 4 motivational factors - 1) rhythm response, 2) musicality, 3) cultural impact and, 4) association:

The song I chose is Permission to Dance. I chose the song because I like the message that it transmits, because it says dance and do not care about the other things that are happening in your life [laughs]  
- Female participant Shkoder



1. 'Rhythm' response refers to the effects of the speed and tempo of the music which can inspire bodily movement.
2. 'Musicality' refers to the melodic and harmonic qualities of the music, such as in terms of pitch and harmony.
3. 'Cultural impact' refers to the pervasiveness of music within social groups or broader society.
4. 'Association' refers to the level of association between the music and the activity

Rhythm response is argued to be the most important motivational factor in music, with association being the least. These motivational qualities can be divided between internal (rhythm response and musicality) and external factors (cultural impact and association). Karageorghis and Priest (2012) argue that choosing styles of music that have strong cultural and personal associations can also have significant cognitive and affective outcomes. 'Although the Rocky example predominantly entails a cultural association, a personal association can occur when a piece of music reminds an exerciser about an aspect of their own lives that is emotionally significant' (p.46). In regard to the content of Albanian Hip-Hop and popular music genres, young people may find affinity with the content if it reflects experiences in their lives which then can in turn promote motivational feelings within them. Music has also been demonstrated to evoke certain moods, emotions and states of mind in the listener having significant benefits in therapeutic interventions. Interestingly for the young people in Albania, music not only provided them with motivational energy but also promoted resilience in overcoming internal psychological and external sociological factors that inhibited their ability to perform.

The song that I like is Alkohol from Yll Limani and Noizy. I like it because of the melody and the sound that it transmits, putting us in a world that we like adrenaline, at the same time from the lyrics as well - Male participant Kukës

## ADVERSITY, RESILIENCE AND CHANGE

A common theme in the pre-pulse discussions was the choice of songs that related to hardships or trauma. Although the young people did not elaborate deeply on this or the events that happened to them, music enabled them to express these sensitive issues and experiences to some extent. For example, a female participant in Kukës explained how people can cause suffering to others by entering their lives only to harm them later down the line. As discussed in RAYS Music Elicitation Report (Levell 2023), adverse childhood experiences

I chose Selena Gomez – People You Know. This song is treating a topic about people that come into our lives, they change you, and then they leave hurting us or breaking our hearts, and we get hurt because of that, but in reality they are not worth it... "What hurts the most is people can go from people you know to people you don't" (song lyrics) - Female participant Kukës



(ACE) can have significant negative effects on individuals that may create long-term problems in the life course and may lead to an increased propensity to engage in organised crime and or gang-related behaviour. Structural factors such as poverty and limited opportunities are also important here. Music has been used extensively in therapeutic

applications in adults and youth and can allow people to open up and express themselves in ways that they may otherwise find difficult. Disclosing sensitive issues in group sessions can foster social solidarity, and bonding and act as a bridge between participants. Moreover, the FAM-strategy's emphasis on developing creative and critical thinking skills (further developed here through concepts from critical literacy), can help young people think through structural, social and institutional injustices, whilst considering ways to resolve them; thus, becoming more resilient to these issues. Indeed, although some young people discussed experiences of adversity through the music they choose, they also expressed forms of resilience in overcoming them. In doing so they exhibited a desire to be agents of change rather than victims of adversity (Cyrułnik 2009). Resilience narratives

## RESILIENCE NARRATIVES

Psychological resilience (also known as m psychologists and psychotherapists but also has relevance in organised crime. Resilience psychology is a rapidly evolving field that aims to understand the mechanisms which help strengthen an individual's resolve in times of

stress, crisis and hardship. It can be defined as a 'dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity' (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). A key priority in reducing organised crime is to create social conditions for young people that promote positive pathways in life where they do not experience adverse experiences that impact negatively upon them. Where social conditions are not favourable, there is a need to foster resilience in youth, and also in their communities, so that these experiences and conditions can be successfully addressed.

In understanding what makes some people more resilient than others, there can be certain social and psychological

'protective factors' that enhance positive adaptation to difficult experiences. Given the emotive and motivational qualities of music, certain songs may in fact have a role in fostering psychological resilience in youth. Lyrics-based interventions may enhance this process by enabling young people to express their thoughts feelings and emotions, whilst also developing

"I chose the song The Neighbourhood – Softcore. I like this song a lot because I have been through a lot of things in life, and I am still a bit young, and my favourite part is: "I'm too consumed with my own life "Are we too young for this? Feels like I can't move, sharing my heart, it's tearing me apart" (song lyrics)" Female participant Shkoder

"I chose the song of Luana Vjollca – Isha. So, I like the lyrics because it motivates all women and bullied girls". Female participant Kukës.

"The song I chose is What a Wonderful World from Louis Armstrong. I like it because the singer was, he passed through the first and second phase [cancer] and he says that even if he dies from cancer, he is the happiest in the world." Male Participant Kukës.

self esteem, creative and critical thinking skills. In Kukës for example, a female participant expressed how music can motivate women and bullied girls. This demonstrates that the motivational qualities of music go past promoting engagement in social or physical activities but also help young people to overcome adverse experiences.

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

A common theme that was expressed by youth in relation to overcoming adversity was that of social support. Resilience literature demonstrates that one of the pivotal protective factors that enhance resilience is having strong positive social bonds with family members and peers (Walsh 2016). Asides from the emotional benefits of this, positive social ties, whether personal or through civic engagement with institutions, can create forms of social control that encourage non-criminal behaviour (Sutherland 1972). That is aside from the positive social learning that is accrued through association with non-criminal actors. Indeed, positive familial relationships and social support in the community can alleviate mental health disorders in youth and reduce their propensity to crime (Triana et al. 2019). For example, a young person in Shkoder discussed a song by Billy Elish. They explained that having someone who cares deeply about them can help to stop other people from hurting them and causing emotional trauma. Another young person expressed a song related to alienation in society that can lead to emotional pain but can be resolved through social support. These themes also relate to findings from the FGD Report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023) whereby young people frequently talked about the need for belonging and acceptance in Albanian society.

“the song that I have chosen is a song from a K-pop group, it’s Runaway by Tomorrow x Together... Regarding the text, I like it because it talks about alienation, self-isolation, meaning to get away from society, getting away from anyone and to feel very empty inside. But then in reality you really have people that support you and are always there for you”. Male participant Kukës

I chose the song of Billie Elish – Everything I wanted. I like it as a song because it’s a bit relaxing, I listen to it all the time. The part that I liked the most is: "As long as I'm here, no one can hurt you" (song lyrics) - Female participant Shkoder

“I chose the song Wicked Games from Chris Isaak, and one part that I liked is: “The world was on fire, and no one could save me but you”(song lyrics)”. Female participant Shkoder

## LOVE & LOSS

Resilience narratives around love and loss were also common within the pre-pulse discussions. However, this applied mainly to the girls in the group reflecting gendered differences in music preferences and modes of expression. The differences between genres were also reflected in the RAYS music survey and may relate to wider ideologies and patriarchal norms and values around genders in society that may influence their choices. Although the discussions around the songs did relate to experiences of hardship in love, there were also positive elements of overcoming these events as well as learning

from them. As with some of the other respondents, the young people also reported how the songs positively affected their moods and emotions.

“I chose two songs, one of them is Reckless by Madison Beer. I like it a lot because it is relaxing, I can listen to it during lunch, during night-time, and it calms my brain. Plus, one short fragment that I liked: “And she must be perfect, oh well” (song lyrics). So, it means that she had a breakup with her boyfriend, and she experienced it very badly. She thinks that the girl which the guy went with after her, is better than her. This is something that I don’t agree with, because we are all perfect people, and it doesn’t have to be that someone is better, we are all equal”. Female Participant Shkoder

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In Kukës, an interesting theme that was discussed was that of environmental sustainability. Global warming, deforestation, pollution, and the pillaging of natural resources have had severe environmental impacts on contemporary society. This has led to extreme heatwaves, droughts and flooding, combined with the mass extinction of endangered species. Scientists have predicted that these issues will only get worse as governments are not acting quickly enough to resolve them and some of the effects may be in fact irreversible (Solomon et al. 2009). This will have a greater impact on young people as they grow older, and the process accelerates. Music interventions provide a platform to engage young people in debates about climate change and have their voices heard on the effects it is having upon them. This may also lead them to actively engage in this field more broadly.

“one of them which I chose is Michael Jackson – Earth Song. It talks about the earth and disasters that happen in earth, and that humanity should become better, or that it should protect our earth and the living that are on it, and humans, etc.” Male participant Kukës

“The song that I chose is in French, it’s from the one who sings *Derniere Danse*, Indila. It’s not that I understand the lyrics that much, but a paragraph that I like and came to my mind is: [says the lyrics in French] when you translate it means ‘I am a child of this earth’” Male Participant Kukës

## CRIME

The final theme in the pre-pulse discussion was that of crime. Albania is a common drug trafficking route for heroin and cocaine due to its geographical location (the Balkan route), and high rates of corruption. It also has a problem with the domestic production of drugs; largely cannabis. In contexts of poverty and limited opportunities, organised crime presents itself as an attractive option in which young people can make money quickly and gain social status. This also relates to

I chose a singer from Sweden whose name is Haval, and the reason why I chose it is because it talks about the streets, how to get away from criminal paths - Male participant Shkoder

migration with young people being smuggled or trafficked from Albania to the UK where they can end up working as drug runners for criminal groups. These roles are highly risky as runners are responsible for carrying and delivering drugs and many Albanians are ending up in UK prisons. Indeed, Albanians represent 'the highest percentage of foreign nationals in custody with more than 1,500 in prison in England and Wales – around 10% of overseas criminals in jail' (HM Government 2021, p.1). It is worth noting that most serious and organised criminals in the UK are white English nationals and not of foreign origin, so these statistics must be considered comparatively to other local crime groups which have dominance in criminal markets (Hobbs 2013). In light of this, these workshops would also be significantly beneficial to at-risk youth in the UK context.

In the discussions, some of the young people expressed a preference for Albanian Drill Music with songs expressing content regarding drugs and violent crime. That being said, some of these artists also had more conscientious lyrics in some of their songs (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2022). In Shkoder, one participant was positively critical and openly discussed the problem and culture of crime in Albania, as well as wanting to resolve it:

I chose Unikkatil because I am a fan of his, I chose the song Qëndro. The reason is because it has a message from within, me for myself, I am that traditional guy and I like moral, I want to be as social as I can, I want the society to be okay, as little immorality and ignorance. Here he expressed very beautifully, with three verses he says:

It's such a tragedy how the youth today get manipulated

Parents have forgotten how to educate their children

My head hurts, tears are fallin since the day I found out

The fact that Albanians are jealous of the ones who are illiterate

Because I found it and it was very true, I don't know, simply we're Albanians a population that likes the criminal, not the one who is educated, but the boss, with Lek who is a criminal, you understand? And then, pfff, illiterate, without any type of knowledge, without any type of personality simply. We Albanians, we have it as a tradition somehow, I don't know how to say it, we are Albanians.

Participant Shkoder

# 7. EVALUATION: LYRICS ANALYSIS

Having completed the pre-pulse discussions, participants were tutored on how to assess the lyrics of a song of their choice (receptive/prescriptive stage). As stated, the aim of this was to help them develop a critical perspective on the songs' content and improve their ability to recognise rap lyrics as works of art rather than as literal descriptions of reality. It also aimed to uncover connections between power and language to help uncover injustices and structural inequalities which are reflected in the content. Some of the participants choose songs that they had in the first session whereas others chose completely new songs altogether. Their analysis and discussion of the songs were significantly more detailed than in the pre-pulse discussions, demonstrating progressive learning and awareness. Again, the transcripts were analysed and broken down into themes:

## ADVERSITY, RESILIENCE AND CHANGE

As with the pre-pulse discussions, the themes of adversity resilience and change were most commonly discussed in the lyrics analysis sessions. Adverse experiences and limited opportunities in youth can have long-term effects in the life course that can lead to issues such as poverty, mental health issues, criminality and also victimisation. Nonetheless, these discussions also had a strong theme of resilience and positive change. As stated, resilience is a psychological (and social) trait that enables certain people to bounce back from life's setbacks. Highly resilient individuals are able to alter their trajectory, emotionally recover, and continue working toward their objectives, instead of allowing challenges, unpleasant experiences, or failure to overwhelm them and sap their determination (Zolkoski and Bullock 2012). In the lyric analysis discussions, these themes emerged alongside narratives of social and structural change as young people envisaged more positive futures for themselves and Albanian society. The first of these themes outlined here is that of gender.

## GENDER INEQUALITY, BULLYING AND RESILIENCE

In line with findings from the FGD report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023), discussions around gender inequality, bullying and resilience surfaced within the session. Bullying can have severe social and emotional impacts on people as well as having negative effects on the bullies themselves. Individuals that are bullied are more likely to suffer from issues with their mental health, such as depression and anxiety. They can struggle to create social relationships and may drop out of education or the workplace. Bullying can increase the propensity to commit crime both in youth and in later life. It is a problem that affects both genders but is more likely to be experienced by those from disaffected backgrounds (Lantos and Halpern 2015). The following example is taken from a participant in Kukës:

I chose the song that I said earlier Luana Vjollca – Isha.

Whose viewpoint is expressed (reads questions from worksheet)? The viewpoint which is being expressed is that of every bullied or mistreated woman and female from someone else.

What message or intention do you think that the author wants the listener to understand? The motivation, the inspiration, and the support for every bullied female, and the awakening of the broken hearts from the abuse that has been done in them.

In this song I have learned that we should be strong and brave, no matter the circumstances, and we should fight, we should never give up. Gender, it talks about girls and females, it talks about both sides' family and friends, power and respect, it talks about the ability to overcome unfortunate events and difficulties in life

Female participant Kukës

Our previous focus group respondents suggested that, in Albania, classic patriarchal values remain around the roles of males and females in society (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023). The males are expected to be the main breadwinners, to work, be economically successful and provide for the family. Females are expected to take up roles within the family home, doing domestic chores and caring for the family. These social norms and values appear firmly entrenched in local cultures and can create significant pressure on both genders. For men, it is imperative for them to be financially successful or else experience the shame of failure to support the family. This pressure can lead to crime if viable legitimate opportunities do not present themselves (Billingham and Irwin-Rogers 2021). According to a 2018 Home Office Report on domestic and gender-based violence, the pressure on men and boys to give financial assistance may manifest as hostility toward families (HM Government 2018); this also relates to the prior vignette on bullying. The uncritical way in which a female participant in Shkoder expressed this ideology uncritically in her lyric analysis, suggests a persistent internalisation of such norms, even among young people in Albania (my emphasis).

I chose the song of Majk – Nuk Dorëzohna where the viewpoint he has expressed is personal, the author is based in his personal experiences. And the message he wanted to transmit is that everything can be achieved, with a lot of hard work and sweat. Where no matter the challenges and unexpected events that you may encounter during the journey, you will always achieve it, and you will not give up.

This kind of lyrics can be perceived from different perspectives mainly from the perspective of males, which are stronger, and they should fight to move forward, to keep their family. Through this song, I learned, or I refreshed the message where a lot of books, actors, and different poets bring out. We should never give up and we should fight hard.

The themes relate to both groups, but also how males should fight hard to gain a status in order to achieve something.

Female participant, Kukës.

## SOCIAL ALIENATION

Social alienation is a concept which relates to experiences of isolation, in which people feel disconnected from friends, family community or wider society. It involves a disjuncture from common norms and values and can be caused by various social, structural or economic factors. Social alienation can lead to powerlessness, cultural and social hatred, self-hatred, feelings of loneliness and emptiness, and other related social and psychological issues (Zolfaghari and Ashayeri 2021). These anomic tendencies are also known as key drivers of crime and in which the separation from broader social norms and values combined with psychological trauma creates conditions in which young people turn to criminality. The example below is taken from a male participant in Kukës. He elaborates further on the song Runaway by TXT, discussing the experience of alienation for Albanian youth alongside the feelings of sadness and despair that it brings.

The message or the purpose that the singer wanted to express in the song, is that you should not trust everyone, because in the end you will regret it, and you will not be the same person that you were before. It is his viewpoint, he is talking about himself, that he was in a love story, and in the end he breaks the girl's heart. He wants her back again, but the girl does not go, and he feels very sad, and like that, in the end he regrets the mistake he did - Female participant Kukës

When I chose the song that I mentioned earlier Runaway by TXT....they are talking about their own story that they express through the song. But they are speaking through the fans as well.. The message is the strong adolescent emotions, such as sadness, despair, love, everything that an adolescent experiences throughout school, throughout life. It mainly talks about despair and how you feel tired with the lifestyle that you have, and the whole song is runaway, meaning to get away from the monotony together with your true friends, if I can mention some of the lyrics?

It feels like everyone's happy but me  
It hurts more when I smile than when I cry  
Though I try to hold it back every day, though I try to hang in there  
But it's not working so well  
Right now, what I need is your hand

Male participant Kukës

The lyrics of the song enable the participant to express the emotional difficulties that young people experience in life, which make them want to escape from society. There

We need real friends today, the ones who we can trust and spend a really fantastic time together, to accept a person as they are, for them to always be themselves, it talks about real friendship... I learned that in life there are friends that are close to you at every time, and always there to support you... - Female participant Shkoder

is a link here to the migratory themes whereby young people wish to leave Albania for a better life abroad. Importantly, the participant highlights the need and benefits of social support in providing resilience to overcome the effects of social alienation - 'right now what I need is your hand'. Similar findings around the importance of social bonds were also reflected in the sessions in Shkoder.

## RESILIENCE & ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

A key aim of the intervention, as outlined in the Fam-strategy, is to cultivate critical thinking skills in youth which encourage the appreciation of alternative perspectives. Indeed, the intervention aims to challenge pervasive socio-cultural norms and values that can be taken for granted and 'normalised' within Albanian society that may, in fact, either accept or lead to crime. Cognitive transformation can also empower youth to think through injustices, biases and forms of discrimination within society but also within the attitudes and behaviours of individuals themselves. In addressing the questions of the worksheet, the examples here clearly demonstrate an appreciation of alternative perspectives (defamiliarisation) but one that also relates to forms of resilience that comes from positive relationships with family and friends:

I don't think that there is any specific viewpoint of one individual, but simply that they express their own viewpoint. In the way how the whole world or society is with them, and how they can't fit in with the way that they live, but they simply try to find their own way of how to fit in.... they feel like as if they were ghosts....The song gives a call to all adolescents that not only should they continue forward with their life the way that they want to, but also to look at the world in a different way. The perception of them, of how they, the relation with friends, people, family, and to not feel alone but to understand that there are other people who do not feel like that in their lives.

Male participant Kukës

## LOVE & LOSS

As with the pre-pulse discussions, a common theme that emerged within the resilience narratives was that of love and loss. Again, this applied mainly to the girls in the group reflecting the gendered differences in music preferences, but also in their modes of expression. Although often positive, romantic relationships in youth can be difficult: "Navigating romantic relationships in adolescence/young adulthood is a normative developmental task that can be both pleasurable and challenging for youth. The success with which one does so is both predicted by and subsequently affects psychological well-being" (Davila et al. 2016, p.1). Young people, frequently engage in problematic romantic relationships, with many of them reporting experiences of physical, psychological and sexual forms of abuse, which may occur online and offline. Adolescents who are involved in unhealthy relationships may develop physical and psychological problems that may manifest in youth or adulthood. Physical and sexual abuse is also related to suicide, substance misuse, unwanted pregnancies, and diminished life quality. As such it is important to find ways to promote healthy relationships between young people, as well as resolve the adverse circumstances that impact upon them (Hielscher et al. 2021). Music interventions allow people to explore a variety of life problems including love and



romance and are useful tools in overcoming the feelings associated with them. Again, the topic of love and loss emerged in both Shkoder and Kukës, yet by critically evaluating lyrics, young people were able to express their emotions and experiences around these issues, whilst also considering ways to overcome them. Trust between loved ones was a key problem here, yet social support helped in addressing experiences of 'heartbreak'. Importantly, through the process of the exercise, the girls were also able to consider alternative points of view (defamiliarisation), such as the boy's experience of being in a relationship:

So, I chose one of the two songs that I chose in the beginning from Madison Beer. The first question is whose viewpoint is expressed? (reads from the worksheet) I think that from the way that the author expressed herself, is from her viewpoint.

The second question, what message or intention do you think that the author wants the listener to understand? So, I think that the author wanted to tell that no matter how much you love someone, they won't always be near you, maybe you will cry, you will get sad, but you will always get up and continue to stay stronger.

The next question, are any voices missing, silenced, or discounted? I think that except the perspective of the girl, there is the boy's viewpoint as well, even though she could be the person that leaves him, the boy can have his own problems too, his own reasons why he broke up with her.

We have the other question, what action might you take based on what you have learned? So, based on the analysis and different viewpoints, I think that society should be more responsible towards either relationships, friendships, etc.

Female Participant Shkoder

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

As with the pre-pulse discussions, the theme of economic sustainability emerged during the lyrics analysis session. The male participant from Kukës chose the same Michael Jackson song as before but was able to elaborate on it further through the questions set in the worksheet. In a recent study on climate change, Armstrong Mckay et al. (2022) predicted that with the current rate of global warming, we are on track to trigger 5 environmental tipping points that could have disastrous consequences. They listed a total of 16 tipping points in total which would be reached if the earth warmed to 2C having dire effects upon humanity and life on earth more generally. Scientists have warned that these problems will only get worse. However, as stated previously, music provides a platform here to engage young people in debates about climate change and have their voice heard on the effects it is having upon them:

So, the song I chose is the one I had earlier, Michael Jackson - Earth Song.

It is a song that talks about the earth, in the first question that says whose viewpoint is expressed? The viewpoint for the earth, that surrounds us.

And then it says, what message or intention do you think that the author wants the

listener to understand? It expresses the purpose that the earth and environment that we are surrounded with, is getting destroyed day-by-day and that we should protect it with all costs.

Then the other question that says, are any voices missing, silenced, or discounted? No, the author expresses the viewpoint that he has himself, for example to protect the earth, etc. Then it says, what action might you take based on what you have learned? Is that in life we must analyse situations that happen, and we should give the right to do something in the case of the earth, we should give the right to the one who is right, the one who deserves it. That we should protect the earth or the native land where we live in at every corner, and we should not let it get destroyed or let bad things happen.

Male participant Kukës

## CRIME

Narratives around the theme of crime were also present in the lyrics analysis session. The young people here were ambivalent and critical of crime; however, some expressed an affinity to criminal content in their choice of music. Interestingly, this theme was expressed more often by participants in Shkoder than in Kukës. This may reflect crime trends in the area, with Kukës having a smaller population of around 75,00 people, whereas Shkoder has a population of around 200,00 people more than double the size. Cities that have greater urban development are typically associated with higher rates of crime, particularly where there are pockets of poverty. Indeed, recent media reports in Shkoder have documented a number of murders stoking concerns of local 'blood feuds'. However, urban conflict is common in many cities throughout the world but has been framed here locally through this traditionalist Albanian cultural narrative (self-mystification). Nonetheless, our FGD analysis provided deeper insights into the differences between Kukës and Shkoder (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023). One important difference is that Shkoder has always had better infrastructural connections than the more isolated Kukës. Also, Shkoder hosts a lot of communities who fled social conflicts in the mountains, hence there are lots of alienated and displaced 'newcomers' there. That being said, the differences in responses could also be an artefact of the sample itself and may reflect the socio-economic backgrounds of the participants within the study. In the example below the young person chooses a song from a famous Albanian rapper called Noizy. His tracks often contain references to drugs, crime and misogyny.

I chose the song Nuk kan besu from Noizy. The first question, whose viewpoint is expressed? (reads from the worksheet) The author's viewpoint is being expressed, he expresses his activity, how he achieved a dream of his.

What message or intention do you think that the author wants the listener to understand? In this song the author wants to show how that he has achieved his dream, and that everyone can achieve their dream through work.

Are any voices missing, silenced, or discounted? In this song the opinion of the audience is missing, which can be different from that of the author.

How might alternative perspectives be represented? I think the creation of a network

from people who want to express their opinions regarding the song.

The fifth, what action might you take based on what you have learned? I learned that the author has expressed a success through the song, and I would choose the same way of expression. Whereas at the themes I chose gender, family, power and respect.

Male participant Shkoder

Nu Kan Besu by Noizy is a Hip-Hop track with lyrics that talk about achieving success despite adversity (the hero's journey), although it reflects a criminal theme throughout. In the lyrics Noizy talks about how people 'didn't believe in us, they didn't believe what I said. They didn't believe that one day I would come and go away'. This again reflects broader ideals of leaving or migrating from Albania for a better life abroad. Importantly when asked if there are any voices missing from the lyrics, the participant recognises that the listeners of the song may have a different point of view. In this respect, resilience to criminal content may occur through critical thinking that promotes the appreciation of different perspectives (as outlined in the FAM-strategy). The appeal of this song and its content is evident, however, by the fact that he aspires to express himself in the same way. Nonetheless, it is likely this relates more to the popularity of these styles and the motivational effects of the music, rather than engaging in crime itself. Lyrical expressions through music are artistic and should not be taken literally (Ilan 2020).

## CRIME AND POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

As stated, some participants discussed the topic of crime more critically in the lyrics analysis session and choose songs that had more conscientious content. In the example below the young person chooses a song by Unikakti – Qëndro. The song talks about how Albanian youth have become easily deceived about what represents a positive path in life. He argues that young people aspire to social ills such as drugs for respect and social status yet suffer equally with their mental health. The lyrics in the song promote a message of resilience, hope and change in the context of social problems:

I chose the same song I had before, Unikakti – Qëndro.

In the first question it says, whose viewpoint is expressed? The author expresses his own viewpoint, his own beliefs about the society, for the mentality that we have and how there is a close connection in the education that we get, based on the examples that we follow.

It says, what message or intention do you think that the author wants the listener to understand? The author wants us to understand where our society is, in what level, where it fails, and he tells where it needs to change

Male participant Shkoder

The concept of social learning has deep theoretical roots within criminology and has been consistently applied to explain offending. The central argument is that crime is learned through association with others, especially those with close social ties (Sutherland 1972). This can also occur on a broader level where criminogenic norms

and values become widespread in society, or where crime is promoted through media. Poignantly, the participant goes on to express how crime can be resolved by promoting good examples rather than bad ones. In this respect, it is imperative to highlight positive non-criminal pathways and achievements to counteract those that promote crime:

What action might you take based on what you have learned? In our society, I wanted to tell you again, according to him we have a fall (problem) with morality. How it says in the song that the bad examples get more promoted, or to say Albanians consider the illiterate ones as examples. The bad examples get more promoted, and the good ones don't, only the bad ones, so he is asking how we can solve this? We can solve this simply by not promoting the bad examples, being more selective of the good examples, to promote them more and put them in front of young people.

Male participant Shkoder

# 8. EVALUATION: LYRICS AND BEATS MAKING

The following section outlines the findings from the lyrics and beats-making sessions. It draws upon the lyrics that young people created in Kukës and Shkoder, which were then recorded onto their beats, which were also created within the workshop. To encourage agency within the process, there was some flexibility here and participants were encouraged to work in ways they felt suited them. They were also given the freedom to write songs of any genre of music of their choice, although the examples given by the instructor were in Hip-Hop. In light of this, the young people created beats and lyrics of varying genres and content. Some of the participants decided to only produce beats, whereas others only wrote lyrics. There were also some collaborations where young people worked together to produce their tracks as a team. For example, in Shkoder five participants worked to produce both the beats and lyrics of their track, whereas, in Kukës, two female participants worked together, with one producing the music and the other writing the lyrics. A few participants decided not to share their lyrics with the group, as they did not feel comfortable doing so, and sent them via email instead. As with the pre-pulse and lyrics analysis sessions, the data has been broken down into themes. As before, resilience narratives were the most common type of lyrics produced by the young people in both cities.

## ADVERSITY RESILIENCE AND CHANGE

### POVERTY

According to the World Bank, Albania has changed from being one of the most impoverished nations in Europe to a nation with an 'upper-middle income'. It states that Albania is putting into effect significant measures to revive development and job creation while pursuing the goal of becoming part of the European Union. In order to achieve this, the government is putting key structural changes and policy reforms into place that aim to promote factors such as equitable growth, economic productivity, competitiveness, employment growth, enhanced governance and the provision of public services (World Bank 2022). Nonetheless, Albania is rated as the 5th poorest country in Europe with a significant proportion of the population living in poverty (World Population Review 2022), especially those in rural areas. Experiences of poverty are common to youth that are at risk of engagement in organised crime; it is a key risk factor for criminality. In the lyrics of the young people, experiences of poverty were present but so were those in having resilience in overcoming them.

The following example provides an excerpt of the lyrics of a female participant in Shkoder, along with her discussion. She narrates a story of a young girl who was able to achieve her dreams despite other people in her community telling her that she would not be able to. Importantly, she states that she achieved her dream through social justice. Contra to other resilience narratives, she achieved her goals despite limited social support.

Lyrics:

She was a very little girl  
She had infinite dreams to achieve  
She was smiley, happy, and good  
Honest, loving, strong, free

She wasn't scared to fight hard,  
She didn't want her results just there, with no meaning,  
She always won with justice (rightfully)  
She lost sometimes, but it doesn't matter

All alone, in every side  
Everyone would tell her, you are special  
No one could beat her for smartness  
Don't even try it, none of you

She reached here with her own force  
Her origin made it harder for her  
But she didn't leave her dreams  
She fought to not leave them

Discussion of lyrics:

So, the whole song is about a girl that has a lot of dreams, but she doesn't have any resources to, how do you say it? Economic. Financial, and from the whole circumstances... She can't do it, she cannot think about other people helping her with those resources. So, everything that she did, she did it herself, and regardless that she has a lot of people who surround her, none of them really help her.

A lot of times even, they told her that 'you cannot achieve anything from all the things you are thinking in your head, you should lose your dreams, they are not for you'. But the girl shows that with her strength, with the mentality that she created for herself, she can achieve anything she puts her mind to, and every dream that she has.

Female participant Shkoder

## CORRUPTION

Another theme which links into discussions of poverty was that of corruption. According to 2022 data from Transparency International's corruption perception index, Albania has a score of 35 out of 100 (0 is ranked highly corrupted; 100 is ranked very clean). Countries with a ranking below 50 are deemed as having a serious corruption problem (Transparency International 2022). Corruption and organised crime is a symbiotic process and the two are closely linked. Without a means of keeping criminal operations hidden from law enforcement, it is hard to make a long-running illicit enterprise profitable and sustainable. In order to maintain business, official actors must be paid off:

*Corrupt influence can be exerted on all branches of government, namely in the form of police corruption, judicial corruption, and political corruption. Low-ranking, front-line officers (low-level corruption) may be targeted as well as high-ranking officials all the way to the heads of government (high-level corruption). In some cases, influence taking is sporadic and confined to just a few officials (individual corruption); in other cases influence taking is widespread and occurs on a regular basis (systemic corruption) (Von Lampe 2016, p.353).*

Albania suffers from system corruption, which occurs at all levels of society. The consequences of corruption are significant and can have pervasive negative effects on the general population. Corruption can lead to poverty as governments are not able to leverage the resources needed to support the local population. It can cause issues such as inequality in education and job markets as well as slowing the economic growth of the country, causing political instability and eroding democracy (Dimant and Tosato 2018). It is argued that all of the services in Albania that a person typically needs in order to live his or her everyday life comprise of corrupt practices. This includes public administration, taxation, and health care. Public servants are generally paid very low wages creating a high incentive to supplement their salary through illicit means (Irrera 2006). The effects of corruption were felt by the young people in this study, which was also reflected in their lyrics. The following example is taken from a young person in Shkoder who discusses the problem of both corruption and resilience against it. He also discusses issues with social media that affect Albanian youth:

In this lyric I talked about, it was based in the dreams of the Albanian youngsters, noticing that they are against the corruption that happens in Albania.

They're telling me to rap, I don't know where I should start

Corruption is killing us wherever we go

The second one doesn't ask the first one anymore

And the fight starts

Why did you look at me?

No but he cursed you.

Poverty is killing us

And with poverty you have no freedom of speech because the one who has Lek is buying everything with money

You want to work, you need to make connections, cuz otherwise they're going to ask you for money

There's no more meritocracy just hypocrisy

The internet is killing us today, tik tok or snapchat

Whose fault is it? The youth or politics?

Cuz a blogger is earning more than a medical

Young person, Shkoder

## BULLYING & RESILIENCE

In both Kukës and Shkoder, the young people wrote lyrics that related to experiences of bullying and being negatively judged by others. This is related to face-to-face experiences as well as online on social media (cyberbullying). Victims of bullying are often exposed to repeated negative experiences from the actions of other people upon them. As stated in the previous section, these forms of peer victimization can have significant negative social and psychological effects on young people, which can lead to crime. Bullying typically begins during childhood and peaks in the teenage years and can occur over many years into adulthood. Bullying may take many different forms, but the most notable ones include direct physical contact (such as punching), verbal abuse (such as calling names), and relational bullying (exclusion) (Xu et al. 2012).

Cyberbullying is a type of verbal and relational abuse that can take place in various online settings, most typically on social media. Perceived differences, or any trait that sets a person apart from his or her peers, are a major reason why people are the target of bullying. Race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, physical appearance, and individual behaviours are some of examples these (Xu et al. 2012). Nonetheless, the participants in this study were able to express resilience to these experiences through the lyrics that they wrote. In the following example, lyrics were written by a collaboration of five participants of mixed genders in Shkoder. They reflect on themes of overcoming bullying through caring for and supporting others:

I have this pain but I still smile. I'm taking all my time. Everybody's hating but I still be alive. And I can never mind. All the judging guys. Everybody's hating but I still be alive. Laying like a child. Keep changing my side. Looking at myself I'm the mirror of the night. Went from drinking wine to changing faces like a lion. Looking at myself I'm the mirror of the night (lyrics) - Male participant Kukës



Lyrics:

I can see you're sad, even when you smile, even when you laugh

I can see it in your eyes, deep inside you want to cry

Baby I just wanna tell you to be yourself

Just keep it smile, cuz you know no one will ever care

I will be there for you anytime you want

I just hope you'll love yourself like you did before

Don't mind about the things they say, they just know what they do

Take a rest cuz everything will be alright

Just think about your mom and dad how they'll feel if you're sad

Participant group Shkoder

Discussion of lyrics:

And we are talking about bullying that happens nowadays, it motivated us to write the lyrics. Because bullying how to say it, not every person handles it in the same way, for example someone might experience it lightly and someone else can experience it in a heavy way.... But there are some stuff that, words, and I don't know, stuff that happens online to someone as well.

Participant group Shkoder

## LOVE AND LOSS

Love and loss are concurrent themes that were present in all stages of the intervention. Interestingly with the pre-pulse and lyrics analysis sessions, these themes were expressed solely by the girls; however, in the lyrics writing session, there was a slight shift in this gendered divide. Lyrics upon these themes were also expressed by a male participant too, although this was only in Kukës. As stated previously, the differences between genres likely relate to wider ideologies and patriarchal norms and values around females and males in society that influence their choices. These cultural values may be learned from friends, family or from the mainstream media or state institutions. The media is a significant producer of cultural products that provide gendered stories around love and romance which are often consumed and become entrenched minds of the populous. The experience of romance can be quite different from those depicted in the media and many young people encounter unhealthy and problematic relationships in youth as they attempt to navigate this social terrain for the first time. As with other forms of social relationships, structural issues in society such as poverty and inequality can have a negative impact and further compound the issues young people experience in love. As discussed earlier, adolescents who are involved in unhealthy relationships, as a result of trauma or other external factors, may develop physical and psychological problems that can lead to crime. As such it is important to find ways to promote healthy relationships between young people and resolve the structural issues that negatively impact upon

them (Hielscher et al. 2021). Nonetheless, not all of the young people expressed feelings of loss in love and those that did demonstrate themes of resilience in overcoming them. The following example is taken from the lyrics of a male participant in Kukës, his experience of love is one of happiness in having a 'soulmate'.

Lyrics:

Feelin like my head is above the cloud, on the cloud  
Space sound and my heartbeat are getting' loud, getting' loud  
But just like a meteor  
You fell over my head  
Feelin' dizzy  
Feelin' dizzy  
A sleepless night again  
In my bedroom  
A rocket and some propane  
Into space I zoom,  
zoom zoom zoom  
Just like the moon  
You spin around my head  
Too many stars out there  
But there's only one sun  
And it is you  
Male participant Kukës

Discussion of lyrics:

The song I called Space Love and Dizzy, I couldn't do the voice because it didn't turn out well, but I have the lyrics. It talks about love, for example for a girl and a boy, and the person, her soulmate, makes you feel like you are in the middle of space. The song is a bit Hip-Hop and low-fi. To give some sort of relaxing feeling, and a bit spacey.  
Male participant Kukës

## FRIENDSHIP AND LOSS

The themes of love and loss were not restricted solely to romantic relationships and also extended to close friendships (and familial relations) within the lyrics. One of the most important accomplishments in youth is making and sustaining friendships. Teenagers spend a lot of time with their friends, and these friendships are critical to their emotional and social growth. Children develop crucial social skills through friendships, including collaboration, sharing, and dispute resolution (Hartup 1992). Teenage friendships are associated with a number of advantages and positive effects such as increased self-esteem, well-being, confidence and lower levels of anxiety and depression (Costello et al. 2020). These friendships can be particularly intense which can lead to intense feelings of loss and hurt when they come to an end. Lyrics writing can allow young people to express these sensitive feelings in ways that they may not be able to in other contexts. Talking through difficult experiences is a pivotal step in helping to help resolve them. The following example is taken from the lyrics writing session in Shkoder. The participant also stated that writing does not come naturally to her, demonstrating that these sessions have important benefits in developing these skills.

Lyrics:

Losing my best friend

Every night I sit and think bout me and you and all the things we used to do

Still hurts so badly when I think of what you've done

You broke my heart and now you're gone,

I wanna leave you behind...

But I don't have the courage to run

I wipe my tears off my eyes

Trying to forget all your lies

I never knew this is how I end

Losing my best friend.

Female participant Shkoder

Discussion of lyrics:

To tell you the truth the timing was very short to do it, and it's not like writing comes naturally to me. But I got based in our age, that adolescents create friendship with one-another and then there comes the time of separation because simply the interests will be different. It's pretty much based on my personal experience, because it happened to me that I got separated from the best friend that I had. We just simply did not continue being friends anymore, and it was sad for me because I always had her by my side, and I thought writing about it, it's a bit of a personal experience.

Female participant Shkoder

## CRIME

The final theme which was present in all stages of the workshop was that of crime; although, within the lyrics writing session, this was specifically in Shkoder. It is likely this was due to the nature of the participants themselves that attended the session, although it is possible this reflected regional differences. In Shkoder there was a group of teenage 'lads' who were somewhat unruly during the session and were quite loud, made jokes frequently and disrupted the workshop at times. In the classic study 'Learning to Labour' Paul Willis refers to this type of behaviour as 'counter-school culture' (1977). Willis asserts that middle-class ideals dominate the educational system, which working-class boys find difficult to connect to. The 'Lads' in Willis' study vilified mental labour for being feminine and praised manual labour for being masculine. They embraced violence, relished smoking, drinking, and being street smart, and as a result of their actions, they acquired the respect of their peers. Working-class male culture is innately masculine, and this was viewed as a sign of social supremacy. Willis claims that the Lads' counter-school culture prepared them well for the monotony of factory life since they connected such employment with freedom but were really trapped in a life of low pay and social class subjugation that they would later regret, or as in the case of contemporary society, organised crime. According to Ferrell (1997) Perceptions, meanings, and identities are created in cultural settings, but when culture is imposed from above, this can lead to resistance:

*'Within relationships of power, inequality, and marginalization, the control of cultural space is contested; while powerful adults attempt to define and impose cultural space, less powerful young people attempt to unravel this imposition, to carve out their own spaces for shaping identity and taking some control over everyday life' (Ferrell 1997, p. 22-23).*

In light of this, the intervention encouraged individual agency as not to impose culture upon the participants. However, it was essential to encourage a level of order within the sessions themselves, so they were not disrupted. These social skills and behaviours are also important for young people to learn if they are to succeed in work or education (Sandberg 2008). The young men in Shkoder also associated most strongly with Hip-Hop which contained contentious content, and this was also expressed within the lyrics that they wrote. The following example is taken from one of the 'lads' in Shkoder. He performed lyrics live rather than recording them, demonstrating the development of skills in public speaking:

Lyrics:

I'm starting to speak a little, I know it hurts you cuz when I speak it's over  
I don't like to be a soldier, in what I do I am a commander  
I am like 2pac. When I start to write I am unique  
Still cruising in the night, Going out freely even during the day  
I never feared anyone in this world. When God gives you the mind  
Let the others be surprised. Do that, that no one has done before

No one puts this boy down. Silver with big value. When the uncle shoots for the nephew

The whole neighborhood keeps their head up. You have us behind you, just go forward

Besa (the given word) has value for me, and not the dollar. Talk less with your mouth, cuz I can easily lose it (get angry)

Even though I hang out in Shkoder, I am a mountain boy. No one could stop me until now

My verses come like thunder, don't be occupied with me because your whole relatives will disappear

The forefather gave us an Amanet ('testament', 'obligation')

Never surrender, even if the enemy is stronger

Male participant Shkoder

These lyrics are of a typical 'gangsta' style that is common in Hip-Hop and evokes traditional Albanian customary law, known as Kanun. His lyrics also suggest that he belongs to, or identifies with, 'disenfranchised' populations who migrated from the mountains. He conjures up narratives of 'kanun' to reassert superior status and identity in response to the experience of humiliation and exclusion from the 'Shkodran elites' (Schwandner-Sievers 2003). It is important to note lyrics are an art form that do not necessarily represent real life but are intended to have social effects on the listener:

*'...a significant proportion of violent commentary is not specific provocation but 'phatic' (Miller 2008); part of social exchange as opposed to evidence of real intention. Whilst it is a convention of drill music for rappers to speak in the first person, this should not necessarily be interpreted as confession. Violent and crimino-entrepreneurial lyricism is a means of identifying with the code of the street, establishing an artist as an authentic voice of the ghetto, with all the cultural acumen and 'cool' that attaches to this... Within street culture, communicating toughness and violent reputation is as much about preventing actual violence through creating a deterrence effect' (Ilan 2020 p1003-1005).*

As such these lyrics can also be appreciated for their style and impact rather than their contentious content. However, there are important implications to the participants being able to express themselves in this way: 1) it demonstrates that they felt comfortable writing lyrics that they wanted and were not adjusting their style to what they may have perceived was expected of them. The intervention provided a safe space where young people were able to talk freely and have their voice heard, without imposing upon them. 2) it demonstrates that these interventions can connect with disaffected youth who are at risk of organized crime. This is essential as young people can begin to learn attitudes and behaviours that are necessary to succeed in the world of work and education as they distance themselves from street codes and ways of being. 3) these interventions also occupy their time in positive activities instead of spending time on the street. 4)

it also suggests that these interventions may need to be extended in their duration so that practitioners can work with young people over a longer basis and forge closer relationships where they can begin long-term constructive work.

Nonetheless, even in lyrics that contained contentious content, there were many positive aspects to them where the young people began to think more critically about the causes of problems in society, which can lead to participatory civic engagement. The following sections below are excerpts from a longer song of gangsta rap style but have been shortened here to highlight the critical elements. The author expresses how friends can put people on bad pathways and that even if life is tough, morality is worth more than money.

Lyrics:

He seems like 'gang' but he's a ballet fan,  
Now tell me, where did the shame go in everyone? [Albanian values of shame and moral values]  
With lek, in debt, the forlorn without any moral is left  
It's not your fault, but Izet didn't keep it.....  
No, you don't have it, you will become with stripes, stripes  
You stay and talk about them, but you don't know what Mafia is  
Go you boy, cuz' mom is waiting at home  
Ah friends put you in bad paths....  
Life is not easy but with a lot of challenges  
Unikkatil's fan is talking over here,  
I sing the song, then I feel it,  
There's no point in trying, the rebel won't stop  
I'm interested in moral, not interested in money  
Old traditions (values) but a young boy,  
I don't make rap, but philosophy.  
Male participant Shkoder

# 9. FINDINGS: POST PULSE

The following section outlines the post-pulse phase where we conducted group interviews with the participants to obtain information about their opinions on the workshop and the tasks that were set within them. This was done to determine whether participants had acquired social, practical, and critical thinking skills during the sessions, allowing us to identify changes in perspectives, perceptions and attitudes. Additionally, we asked them to consider any strengths and weaknesses in the workshops that could be improved upon moving forward.

## CRITICAL THINKING

A key aim of this intervention was to develop cognitive transitional processes alongside creative and critical thinking skills as outlined in the Fam-strategy. Concepts from critical literacy were employed to trigger this learning process and encourage participants to think through relationships of power, inequality and injustice. When asked to reflect on the workshop a

number of young people expressed how the session did in fact allow them to be more critically attuned to the content and think more deeply through the lyrics. Indeed, The post-pulse discussions gave extensive data on the advantages for the participants. Many participants noted a significant shift in their perception of lyrics as they came to realise that these elements can have deeper meanings or intentions than they initially appeared to. The example below is taken from the group discussion in Kukës. The participant discusses how the questions prompted him to think about the lyrics in more depth. Importantly, he states that the questions provided would be useful when listening to other songs in the future:

When we listen to songs in the beginning, we only listen to it because of the instrumental and we don't focus a lot in the lyrics, or what the author wanted to transmit with that lyrics. This exercise was very useful, because besides the surface in music, it makes us think how the author is thinking, and to see if we really find ourselves in that song, what is unfolding in the song - Female participant Shkoder

They were questions that were really going in depth of the song... when you get in and do an analysis, then you understand how much meaning and emotions the author/singer puts in the whole song and how much we can relate to those lyrics.

And I think that not just the songs that we did here, but we should keep these questions in mind for any type of song and to always think about it and sometimes ask those questions....

To tell you the truth, before I did this training a lot of times when I would listen to the majority of Hip-Hop songs, I would simply think that there are some rappers that for example, use a lot of banal words and they are very inappropriate. But when you go

in very deeply in the analysis, maybe in reality those banal words are only being used in an artistic way. Maybe they don't use them as much as they seem banal, but simply the artistic way of using them makes them become closer with the listeners.

Male participant Kukës

In regards to contentious content in Hip-Hop, it is clear that this participant has some antipathy towards these styles but through the analysis has gained a better understanding of them. In continuing this discussion further, a participant in Shkoder highlighted a generational divide in which he felt older adults took the content too literally 'to the ones who are older it gets misunderstood, the ones who are not used to it'. Nonetheless, participants suggested the negative effects of rap music in facilitating gang violence and that artists should bring more 'educative topics' into their content.

I think that disses are part of rap that don't want to get separated from the music, my opinion. Because they are always practicing hate within some people, and then it became a trend that one person can be hated from a lot of other people who support the other, and they create even more hate.

Female participant Shkoder

Yes, you said it yourself that rappers use different themes, they use some topics that, let's say, not just somebody, but we shouldn't be listening to those, they shouldn't be there. I said even earlier, in our society the bad example gets promoted not the good one, and rappers should bring educative topics in rap, to bring out education from rap.

Male participant Shkoder

This discussion clearly demonstrates how the intervention has promoted young people to think more critically about the music that they listen to. There were also indications that these critical thinking skills extended past music to other contexts which is a significant finding: 'Yes, yes. Not just with books, because often we heard that while we are reading something we start fantasizing, taking their perspective.'. This shows the potential for these workshops to cultivate critical thinking skills around a variety of textual forms, whether this be books, music, political commentaries or even social media. Indeed, the capacity to apply these skills to a variety of mediums was communicated to the participants in the worksheets.

## PRODUCTION SKILLS

In addition to the aim of cultivating critical thinking skills and promoting transformative civic engagement, the workshops also aimed to teach young people practical skills in how to produce music. Music production is typically achieved through digital sequencing software and audio editors. As stated, these programmes typically involve using desktop computers and laptops; however, advances in technology have now brought freeware



music production software to smartphones. The workshop was designed to teach young people who had no experience in music production how to create complete and original tracks of their own over a 2 day period (with a day break in between). All the young people were successfully trained on how to use the software and the majority decided to create their beats and record lyrics to them. Participants in both areas said they enjoyed using the software and learned a great deal from the sessions:

Before coming to this training I wanted to produce music.... But I tried a lot of different programs before, and I found it very difficult, I encountered problems during production. It never came out as I thought about it in my head, and in shorter words, just the software, I didn't know how to work with the basics of the software in music. But through this training I think that this passion of mine got reborn, because now I have it much easier to understand better how music works, the music industry, and a lot of other things. So, I think that it had a huge impact on me.

Male participant Kukes

In the example above the participant talks about how he had wanted to produce music before but found it too difficult. by taking part in the workshop, he was able to overcome these barriers which reignited his passion. Not all of the participants were new to making music, however. One of the participants in Kukës was already a practising musician and knew how to play instruments and produce music with digital software (although his preference was for producing music live). Nonetheless, he stated that he learned a great deal from the workshop and also thoroughly enjoyed it. He stated that it was one of the best experiences of his life.

Yes, as far as the part where we were talking about beat making in production, I think that I learned some stuff that maybe I didn't know before. Regardless of the most important part that I already knew, but there were some smaller stuff, a bit more on point that I didn't know before and now I learned. Maybe I learned another rule in music from Mark.

Male participant Kukës

# 10. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this intervention was to provide a music-based platform that allows young people to express their lived experiences, critically evaluate their environments, develop social and practical skills and work towards constructive futures. To achieve this, the intervention delivered a series of music-based sessions with at-risk youth: lyrics analysis, lyrics writing and beats making. Through the application of the FAM-strategy, it aimed to trigger transformative cognitive change by generating creative, new 'ways of seeing'. Critical literacy was useful here as it involved the analysis of texts to uncover relationships between power and language whilst encouraging participatory social action. Examining real-world issues like socioeconomic status, class, and gender, as well as the reasons why specific voices or discourses were silenced in lyrics was facilitated through this approach. Throughout the workshop, young people were given agency in terms of the music they choose but also the manner in which they produced it. In the pre-pulse and lyrics analysis sessions, young people chose a variety of songs across music genres. There were some gendered differences with a preference for pop among girls and Albanian Rap music among boys, although not in all cases. Some young people decided to work in groups whereas others produced their projects by themselves.

Resilience narratives in overcoming hardships emerged throughout all of the sessions; here young people conveyed experiences of overcoming different forms of adversity in their lives through the lyrics they wrote or analysed. Adverse experiences and limited opportunities in youth can have long-lasting repercussions on a person's life chances. However, there was a strong emphasis on resilience to adversity and constructive transformation in these narratives. A number of participants also expressed how music provided them with motivation and energy to overcome difficulties as well as helping them to engage in activities. Resilience narratives around love and loss were common, however, this applied mainly to the girls in the group reflecting gendered differences in music preferences and ways of expression. Navigating friendships and romantic relationships in youth can be both positive and challenging for them. In line with findings from the FGD report (Schwandner-Sievers et al. 2023), discussions around gender inequality and bullying were also present within the sessions.

The participants frequently discussed the importance of social support in relation to overcoming hardship. Having strong, positive social ties with family members and peers is one of the most important protective factors that boost resilience. The young people said that having a close friend or family member can prevent others from inflicting emotional stress and harm. This intervention allowed the young people to explore a variety of life problems demonstrating that lyrics and music production-based workshops are useful tools for overcoming the feelings associated with them. Significantly, the intervention enabled the participants to discuss these sensitive issues and open up in ways that may have otherwise been difficult.

The theme of crime was present in all of the sessions, although most often in Shkoder. This may reflect regional differences or the characteristics of the participants themselves. Indeed, there was a group of boys in Shkoder who were somewhat disrupted which may

have been due to their backgrounds. Some of the young people were ambivalent and critical of crime; however, others expressed an affinity to criminal content in their choice and production of music. Those expressing criminal content in their lyrics were also the most unruly in class, demonstrating a masculine 'counter-school culture'. The workshop tried to resolve this by creating more agency in the sessions, but a level of structuring was necessary. Nonetheless, narratives around violence allow disaffected young people to gain social status in contexts where they have been excluded and marginalised. Indeed, alienation was a topic the young people touched upon in the sessions. Again, this workshop attempted to address this by engaging young people in a safe and welcoming space, where they could participate in enjoyable activities that were aligned with their interests and, ultimately, have their voice heard. The workshop also helped practitioners to connect with these young people, which was one of its key aims and is pivotal to reducing crime. Through the workshop, some of the young people were able to think critically about the causes of crime in their society and how it negatively affected them. Importantly, they also discussed how they thought it could be resolved.

Indeed, the workshop clearly demonstrated the development of critical thinking skills through the tasks that were set. The participants become more cognizant of the ways in which lyrics are written for literary effect rather than taking them at face value. Moreover, they were able to think through social and structural problems, such as corruption and poverty, alongside more global issues such as environmental sustainability. Again, the worksheet promoted them to think about potential solutions to these issues. There were indications that these critical thinking skills extended past music which could be to a variety of textual forms, whether this is books, political commentaries, news or social media. The implications of this in encouraging participatory social action to resolve injustices are significant. Besides from critical thinking, there was strong evidence of the social and practical skills that were gained from this workshop. This included reading and writing skills, public speaking skills, group work, software skills, music analysis and music production.

The workshop has already begun to demonstrate broader impact as it set the foundations, and was used as a blue print, for a successful RAYS music production initiative in Tirana (IEIE: Creating Beats led by Gerhard Veizi). However, there is a significant paucity of recreational music and arts-based activities available to young people in Albania. This highlights the need for investment in long-term sustainable projects of this kind. For example, a female participant expressed how she would like activities in contemporary forms of dance as well as music in her community. In Kukës there are no dance classes for Hip-Hop or Ballet, only those for traditional Albanian folk dancing (shota). In regard to the music industry, the young people felt that there were also very limited opportunities to progress in a career, alongside general experiences of poverty. Nonetheless, the intervention was hugely popular with the young people and was a significant step forward to resolving some of these issues:

There are some people that have dreams but for example they don't have the financial resources to realize them. When I immigrated from the country... I was there, and they had the resources... here is not that you have any resources... I was in America. You can make that dream that you have, you can do it you know? Because if I was there for example, maybe, you know maybe, because I don't know, no one knows for sure, but maybe I could have achieved something - Male participant Kukës

It was the most beautiful experience that I have experienced to tell you the truth. Because it is related to my field, my craft, music. I thank you so much as well, these days that you have supported me.... And just, I had so much fun, and as I was saying, if it only could have lasted longer.

Male participant Kukës

# 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

## **1: FACILITATE TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN LYRICS AND BEATS MAKING WORKSHOPS TO YOUTH WORK PROFESSIONALS AND EDUCATORS.**

The lyrics and beats making intervention demonstrated significant benefits in connecting with at-risk youth whilst helping them to express themselves and think critically through music. It allowed them to constructively think towards their futures and aspirations, as well as how to resolve the social and structural problems in their society. The sessions provided a platform where they could open up and express sensitive experiences in a safe and welcoming environment that was attuned to their interests and sensibilities. In light of this, this intervention has significant potential for helping at-risk youth more widely throughout Albania and elsewhere in the world. It is, therefore, recommended that the lyrics and beats-making workshops are piloted as a training tool for youth work professionals and educators, so they can be delivered more broadly. This would require face-to-face sessions to better develop their professional capacities and skills. These sessions would be provided alongside practical trainers manuals/toolkits to help make the intervention more sustainable on a long-term basis.

## **2: PILOT THE LYRICS AND BEATS MAKING INTERVENTION WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.**

The intervention has only been applied to at-risk youth but could be expanded to young offenders serving time for criminal offences. Indeed, the intervention has significant potential for working with young offenders to help reduce recidivism in the community. The workshop empowered young people to strengthen their resilience to adverse experiences and crime. It provided a music-based platform where they could build self-esteem and envisage constructive futures and pro-social pathways in life. It is essential not only to tackle entry into criminal markets but also to divert those who already have involvement within it. This would provide substantial social and economic benefits for society. In light of this, it is recommended that this intervention be piloted with young offenders in the prison setting and also those who are on probation serving community sentences. Doing so, would not only help to reduce involvement in serious and organised crime but also to develop role models for other young people who are at risk of offending.

## **3: EXPAND THE FAM-STRATEGY TO INCLUDE OTHER ARTS AND/OR SPORTS-BASED INTERVENTIONS.**

Through the application of the FAM-strategy, and critical literacy, the workshop demonstrated the development of critical thinking skills that can help to resolve the factors that facilitate crime as well as broader social and structural problems. Indeed,

the worksheet promoted young people to think about potential solutions to these issues. There were indications that these critical thinking skills extended past music to a variety of textual and verbal content, which has significant implications in encouraging participatory social action to resolve inequalities and injustices. Whilst the lyrics and beats-making workshops provided an excellent tool to facilitate these skills, there is potential for the FAM-strategy to be expanded to other visual and audio arts or sports-based interventions to widen its scope and impact.

#### **4: CONSIDER THE APPLICATION OF RESILIENCE THEORY IN OTHER INTERVENTIONS WITH AT-RISK INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES.**

A key factor in reducing serious and organised crime is by empowering individuals and their communities to become resilient to it. Resilience theory is an emerging field that has roots in psychology but also has important implications for criminological interventions and the social sciences more generally. The young people in this study experienced adversity in childhood but demonstrated significant resilience and constructive transformation in overcoming these difficulties. The workshop helped to support this process through the participants' expression of 'resilience narratives' alongside the social, practical and critical thinking skills that they gained. Social and psychological 'protective factors' promote effective management of adverse experiences, which can explain why some people are more resilient to crime than others. It is essential that these are strengthened in at-risk individuals and social groups. There is significant potential to apply this concept further to help cultivate resilience to organised crime more broadly in Albanian society and elsewhere in the world.

#### **5. DISSEMINATE RESEARCH FINDINGS IN CONFERENCES AND ACADEMIC JOURNALS TO FACILITATE GREATER IMPACT.**

In addition to the impact these interventions are having on the ground, the benefits of this project can be furthered through the dissemination of the research findings in conferences and high-ranking academic journals. Academic journals are a preferred source of academic information due to the peer review process, in which experts evaluate them on their quality. As such, publication in academic journals ensures that these findings will be read by a broad audience of professionals who have an interest in this field. This will also support professionals looking to implement and develop interventions of this kind in the future; further supporting projects with the goal of reducing organised crime. Conferences also provide the opportunity to share knowledge, receive constructive critical feedback and gain new perspectives on the research findings. As such, it is recommended that the findings of this project are disseminated in academic journals and conferences among other mediums.

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# APPENDIX

## WORKSHEETS

### WORKSHEET - ENGLISH

#### 1. Lyrics Analysis

Choose 1 or more rap songs of your choice and answer the following questions:

##### Questions

1. Whose viewpoint is expressed?
  - Is the author talking from their own point of view or are they expressing the opinion of someone else?
  
2. What does the author want us to think?
  - Every written text, whether it be a newspaper article, textbook or rap lyrics, will be written with a particular agenda. Indeed, lyrics are composed of messages with the purpose of influencing the listener in some way.
  
3. Are any voices missing, silenced, or discounted?
  - Texts are often presented from a particular point of view that may miss the perspective of others.
  
4. How might alternative perspectives be represented?
  - For example, if it is a perspective of a man what might it be from the perspective of a women? Other examples could include, parents or children, citizens or the government, criminals or victims, teachers or students..... There may be many different perspectives on the same thing!
  
5. What action might you take on the basis of what you have learned?
  - By considering different perspectives, we may reveal problems in society that need to be resolved. This could be for individual people, communities, or institutions. It is important to consider what we can do to help resolve these issues.

Having answered these questions, discuss how the lyrics in the song\’s you have chosen relate to the following themes

### Themes

- Gender
  - ▶▶ Boys, girls, men, women and other genders.
- Family & friends
  - ▶▶ Relationships with family member or friends
- Power and respect
  - ▶▶ Success, money, reputation, violence, crime, being a VIP.
- Resilience and Survival
  - ▶▶ Overcoming adversity and hardship in life
- Individual growth/change
  - ▶▶ Identifying personal issues and taking steps towards improving the self
- Societal growth/change
  - ▶▶ Identifying issues in the community/society and taking steps towards improvement

## 2. Lyrics Writing

### Real-Life Content

‘The majority of MCs like to write from real-life experience—either autobiographical lyrics about things they have actually gone through or lyrics at least generally inspired by situations they’ve encountered’ (Edwards 2009, p.4). Although these lyrics relate to life experiences they always relate to the perspective of the author and are expressed in different ways. Some life events may be exaggerated to create impact or may have fictional elements. As such the telling of life events through lyrics is a form of art from a particular perspective but it can have effects on those who listen to it.

### Story Form

‘Storytelling has always been an important technique of the hip- hop MC. Being able to structure content in the form of a story is important to being a well-rounded hip-hop artist’ (Edwards 2009, p.34). Most stories in hip-hop follow a pattern similar to traditional stories in books, movies, and TV series. They have characters, settings, and a structured plot—a beginning, a middle, and an end.

## Flow

### Bars

'In music theory, a bar (or measure) is a single unit of time containing a specific number of beats played at a particular tempo' (MasterClass 2021),

The flow is the number of words written per bar. The more words there are, the faster the flow. Some rappers have a fast flow, some have a slow flow, others may mix between slow and fast.

<b>Let me freak the</b>	<b>funk, obso-</b>	<b>lete is the</b>	<b>punk that talks</b>
<b>more junk than</b>	<b>Sanford sells.</b>	<b>I jet pro-</b>	<b>pel at a</b>
<b>rate that compli-</b>	<b>cate their mental</b>	<b>state as I</b>	<b>invade their</b>
<b>masquerade.</b>	<b>They couldn't</b>	<b>fade with a</b>	<b>clipper . . .</b>

(Edwards 2008, p.68)

### Syllables

'Lyrics are broken up into syllables, which are single units of sound. Breaking lyrics down into syllables, rather than just words and sentences, helps us look at flow in a lot more detail-

Each separate sound is its own syllable. For example, take the word obsolete: 'ob-' is a syllable, '-so' is a syllable, and '-lete' is a syllable.' (Edwards 2009, p.71)

This is a very important point to note: a stressed syllable must be said at the same time as each of the four beats in a bar. Syllables can be pronounced fast or slow depending on the flow.

### Rests

'A rest is basically a pause, during which no syllable is said on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th beat of a bar. In the flow diagram, rests are shown by a space under one of the four beats in a bar on which no syllable is said. In the following example, a rest is highlighted' (Edwards 2009, p.73.)

1	2	3	4
<b>Let</b> me freak the	<b>funk</b> , obso-	<b>lete</b> is the	<b>punk</b> that talks
<b>more</b> junk than	<b>Sanford</b> sells.	I jet pro-	<b>pel</b> at a
<b>rate</b> that compli-	<b>cate</b> their mental	<b>state</b> as I	<b>invade</b> their
<b>masquerade.</b>	They couldn't	<b>fade</b> with a	<b>clipper</b> . . .

(Edwards 2008, p.73)

### Perfect Rhyme

'A perfect rhyme is the simplest form of rhyme. It's when one word has exactly the same ending as another word' (Edwards 2009, p.82).

- 'Dog' & 'Fog'
- 'Punk' & 'Funk'

### Compound Rhymes (Multisyllable Rhymes)

'Rhymes can be one syllable long, such as 'cat,' 'bat,' and 'hat.' However, this is rare in today's hip-hop, as most lyrics use compound rhymes, also known as multisyllable rhymes, polysyllable rhymes, or multies.' (Edwards 2009, p.87).

- 'Dropping these mockeries'
- Similes and Metaphors

Similes and metaphors are very similar in that they use examples for comparison. The difference between similes and metaphors comes down to a word. Similes use the words like or as to compare things—'Life is like a box of chocolates.' - 'as hot as hell'. In contrast, metaphors directly state a comparison—'Love is a battlefield.' - 'Time is money'

- My brother was a cackling (laughing) hyena (metaphor)
- My brother cackled (laughed) like a hyena (simile)



## Alliteration and Consonance

Alliteration occurs when words begin with the same letter or sound. It's more subtle than the other types of rhyme, and it does not produce the same effect.

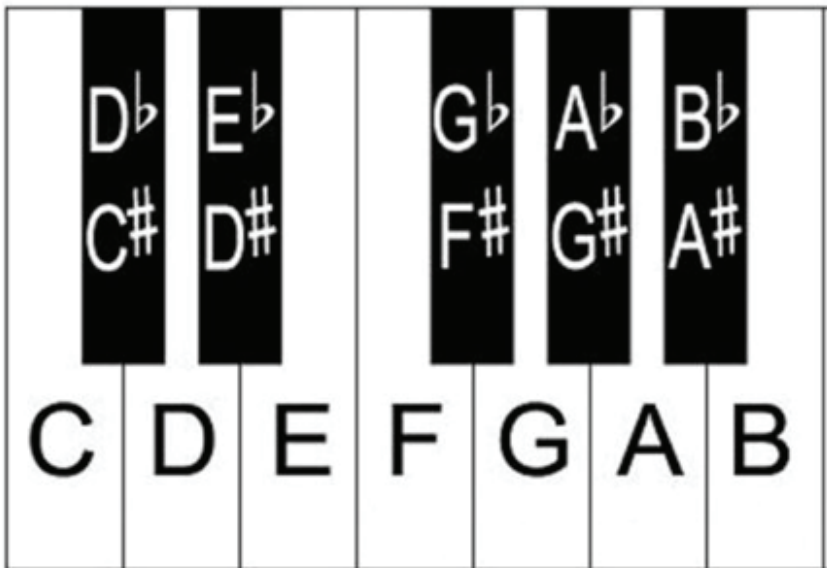
- 'Here's a Jimmy Joke about your Mama that you Might not like.'

In Wu-Tang Clan's song 'Triumph,' Inspectah Deck uses the following compound rhyme:

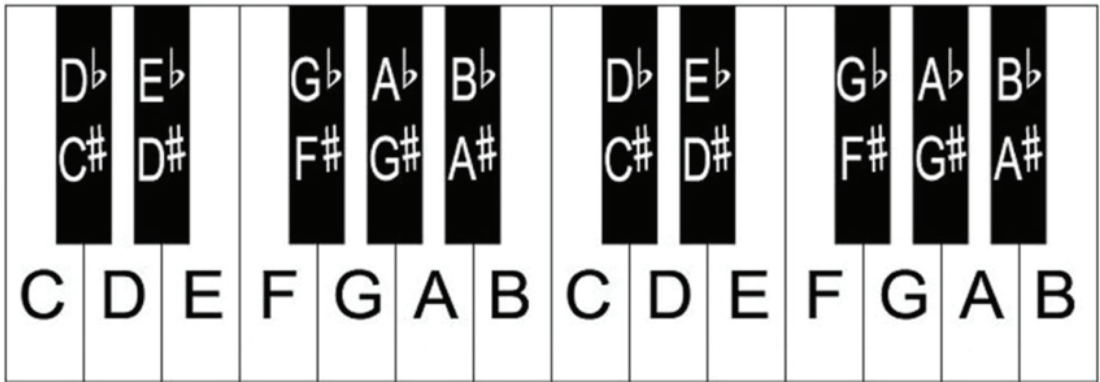
- 'dropping these mockeries' (Edwards 2009, p.86).

## 3. Music Theory

A scale is a sequence of notes that sound good together. Most popular dance music is written in a particular scale/key (typically A-minor).







A keyboard has 12 notes (black and white) that repeat higher and lower in pitch up and down the keyboard. A scale will typically consist of seven of these notes and will take two forms: Major or Minor. Major scales sound more upbeat and happier, whereas Minor sound more dark and moody.

### Working out a scale

#### Steps

- A half step or semitone is the smallest interval (distance) between two notes. For example, the note C is a half-step below C#.
- A whole step is the distance between two notes that have one note in between them. A whole step is equal to two half steps or two semitones. For example, the note D is a whole step above the note C.

#### Major scale

In whole steps and half steps, a major scale consists of this formula

**W - W - H - W - W - W - H**

- A major = A, B, C, D, E, F, & G

#### Minor scale

in whole steps and half steps, a minor scale consists of this formula

**W - H - W - W - H - W - W**

- A minor = A, B, C, D, E, F, & G

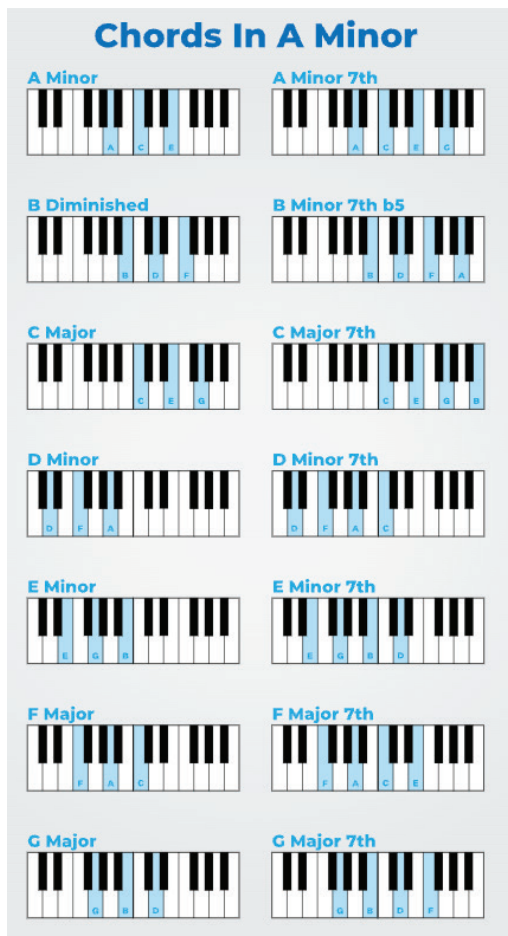
**\*When writing electronic dance music or rap music. Writing in A-minor is the easiest because it uses only the white notes on a keyboard.**

Interestingly C major also only uses white notes but the steps between notes from C upwards follows the major formula. In the A scale, A is the root note, in a C scale, C is the root note. Root notes are keys that are played most often in a melody; they are usually played at the start or end of a bar (or series of bars).

**\*A melody is a sequence of notes played one after another, sometimes with breaks in between.**

### Chords

Chords are 3 notes played together with a number of steps in between each note. They consist of 2 primary forms, major and minor. As previously noted, an easy rule of thumb is to use the A-minor scale to write your tracks as it consists of only the white notes. Just be sure to play the A note more often in your melodies and use chords that begin with this note more often. For simplicity, below is an image of all the chords that can be played in A-minor.



(KeyboardKraze 2023)

### Analizë e tekstit

Zgjedh një ose më shumë, nga këngët rap të preferencës tuaj, dhe përgjigju pyetjeve në vazhdim.

Pyetjet

1. Pikëpamja e kujt është duke u shprehur?
  - Ju duket se autori është duke shprehur pikëpamjen e vetes, apo është duke shprehur pikëpamjen e dikujt tjetër?
2. Çfarë mesazhi ose qëllimi mendoni se autori dëshiron që dëgjuesi të kuptojë?
  - Çdo tekst i shkruar, pa marrë parasysh në qoftë se është artikull nga gazeta, tekst shkollor apo tekst rap, shkruhet me një qëllim të veçantë. Sigurisht, tekstet janë të kompozuara me mesazhe dhe qëllime që ndikojnë dëgjuesin në mënyra të ndryshme.
3. Ju duket se zëri apo këndvështrimi i dikujt tjetër është duke munguar, duke u vënë në heshtje, apo nuk numrohet fare?
  - Tekstet zakonisht shfaqen nga një këndvështrim specifik, dhe aty mund të ndodhë se mungon këndvështrimi i të tjerëve.
4. Si mendoni që mund të përfaqësohen këndvështrimet tjera alternative?
  - Për shembull, nëse është nga këndvështrimi i gjinisë mashkullore, si do mund të jetë nga këndvështrimi i gjinisë femërore? Shembuj tjerë mund të jenë, prindërit ose fëmijët, qytetarët apo qeveria, kriminelët ose viktimat, mësimdhënësit ose nxënësit...

Mund të ketë këndvështrime të ndryshme për diçka që është duke u shfaqur njësoj për të gjithë.

5. Çfarë mekanizmi do aplikoni ju në bazë prej asajë çfarë keni mësuar?
  - Pëmes konsideratës, kuptimit dhe analizës ndaj këndvështrimeve të ndryshme, ne mund të shohim probleme në shoqëri që kanë nevojë për zgjidhje. Kjo mund të jetë për njerëz individual, komunitete, ose institucione. Është e rëndësishme që të konsiderojmë çfarë mund të bëjmë për të ndihmuar të zgjedhim këto probleme.

Pasi që përfundoni përgjigjen e pyetjeve, diskutoni se si teksti i këngës/këngëve që keni zgjedhur lidhet me temat më poshtë.

## Temat

1. Gjinia
  - Djemtë, vajzat, meshkujt, femrat
2. Familja & shoqëria
  - Lidhja mes anëtarëve të familjes ose shoqërisë
3. Pushteti dhe respekti
  - Suksesi, paratë, reputacioni, dhuna, krimi, të qenurit VIP.
4. Qëndrueshmëri dhe mbijetesë
  - Aftësia për të tejkaluar fatkeqësitë dhe vështirësitë në jetë
5. Rritje individuale/ndryshim
  - Duke identifikuar probleme personale dhe duke marrë hapa drejtë përmisimit të vetëvetes
6. Rritje shoqërore/ndryshim
  - Duke identifikuar probleme në komunitet/shoqëri dhe duke marrë hapa drejtë përmisimit

## Shkrimi i tekstit

### Përmbajtja e jetës reale.

Shumica e artistëve këngëtarë (MC) preferojnë të shkruajnë tekstin duke u bazuar në eksperiencat e jetës reale—ose tekst me përmbajtje autobiografike për gjërat që ata kanë tejkaluar, ose tekst që është i inspiruar prej situatave që ata kanë hasur (Edwards 2009, p.4). Edhe pse këto tekste lidhen me eksperiencat e jetës ato gjithmonë lidhen direkt me këndvështrimin e autorit, dhe andaj teksti shprehet në mënyra të ndryshme. Disa ngjarje të jetës mund të ekzagjërohen për të krijuar një ndikim të veçantë, ose mund të kenë elemente fiktive (të imagjinuara) .

### Forma e rrëfimit të tregimit.

Rrëfimi i tregimit ka qenë gjithmonë një teknikë e rëndësishme për artistin këngëtarë (MC) në Hip-Hop. Të jesh në gjendje për të strukturuar, dhe ndërtuar përmbajtjen në një formë tregimi është shumë e rëndësishme për të qenë një artist Hip-Hop'i i rumbullaksuar (Edwards 2009, p.34).

## Ritmi (Flow)

### Takti (bars)

Në teorinë e muzikës, një takt (bar) është një njesi e vetme e kohës që përmbanë një numër specifik të rrahjeve (beats) që janë duke luajtur në një tempo të posaçme.

Ritmi (flow) është numri i fjalëve brenda një takti, këto të dyja duhet të shoqërojnë njëra-tjetrën në një mënyrë perfekte. Sa më shumë fjalë që ka, aq më i shpejtë bëhet ritmi. Disa reperë kanë një ritëm (flow) të shpejtë, disa kanë një ritëm (flow) të ngadaltë, të tjerët kanë kombinim mes atij të shpejtë dhe të ngadaltë.

1	2	3	4
<b>Për qata</b>	që m'dojnë,	e dashni	m'shesin.
<b>Nesër me</b>	<b>dekë,</b>	masnesër	m'keshin.
<b>Ju du sa</b>	<b>qeni</b> e don	<b>pleshtin.</b>	<b>Tu</b> e ngu këtë
<b>sen me</b>	<b>gisht</b> n'gojë	<b>mesin.</b>	<b>N'mesin</b> . . .

(Edwards 2008, p.68)

### Rrokjet

Teksti ndahet në rrokje, që janë njesi të vetme të tingullit. Duke zberthyer tekstin në rrokje e jo vetëm në fjalë dhe fjali, na ndihmon neve që të analizojmë ritmin detajisht (Edwards 2009, p.71).

Çdo tingull i ndarë ka rrokjet e veta. Për shembull, të marrim fjalën muzika: "mu" është një rrokje, "zi" është rrokje, dhe "ka" është rrokje.

Është shumë e rëndësishme të thekësohet kjo pikë: një rrokje e thekësuar duhet të thuhet në të njejtën kohë si katër rrahje (beats) në një takt (flow). Rrokjet mund të shqiptohen shpejtë ose ngadalë varësisht nga takti (flow).

### Pushimet

Një pushim është thjeshtë një pauzë, përgjatë të cilës nuk thuhet asnjë rrokje në rrahjet 1,2,3 ose 4 (beat). Në diagramin e taktit, pushimet tregohen nga një hapësirë brenda një nga katër rrahjet në një takt ku asnjë rrokje nuk thuhet.

<b>Let me freak the</b>	<b>funk, obso-</b>	<b>lete is the</b>	<b>punk that talks</b>
<b>more junk than</b>	<b>Sanford sells.</b>	<b>I jet pro-</b>	<b>pel at a</b>
<b>rate that compli-</b>	<b>cate their mental</b>	<b>state as I</b>	<b>invade their</b>
<b>masquerade.</b>	<b>They couldn't</b>	<b>fade with a</b>	<b>clipper . . .</b>

(Edwards 2008, p.73)

### Rima perfekte

Një rimë perfekte është forma më e thjeshtë e rimës. Ndodhë atëherë kur një fjalë ka përfundimin e ngjashëm sikur një fjalë tjetër (Edwards 2009, p.82).

- "Ora" & "Dora"
- "Bota" & "Gota"

### Rima të përbëra (Rima me shumë rrokje)

Rimat mund të jenë të gjata sa një rrokje, për shembull "rrotë", "botë", dhe "gotë". Sidoqoftë, kjo është shumë e rrallë në Hip-Hop muzikën e tashme, shumica e teksteve përdorin rima të përbëra, poashtu të njohura si rima me shumë rrokje (Edwards 2009, p.73.).

- "Went from Rock 'n' Roll, t'u bo rap n'shkollë"

### Ngjashmëritë dhe Metaforat

Ngjashmëritë dhe metaforat janë shumë të ngjashme sepse të dyjat përdoren si shembuj për krahasime. Dallimi mes ngjashmërive dhe metaforave është vetëm një fjalë. Ngjashmëritë përdorin fjalë "si" dhe krahasimi "sikur".

- Vëllau im ishte sikur një hienë që qeshte ndër hunë (metaforë)
- Vëllau im qeshte ndër hunë si një hienë (ngjashmëri)



### Aliteracionet dhe bashkëtingëllimi

Aliteracionet ndodhë kur fjalët fillojnë me të njejtën shkronjë ose tingull. Është më precize se tjerat tipe të rimave, dhe nuk prodhon të njejtin efekt (Edwards 2009, p.86)..

- "O **B**ajram, **B**ajrak i gjallë"
- "Vijnë **v**ashat **v**alle **v**alle"

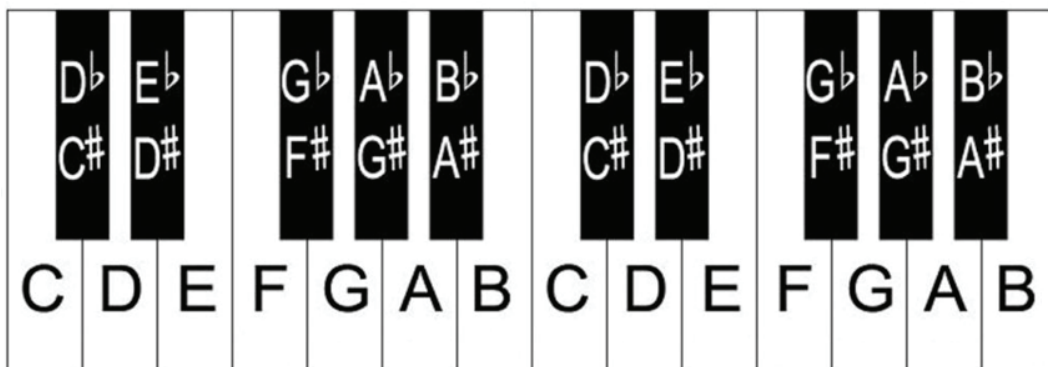
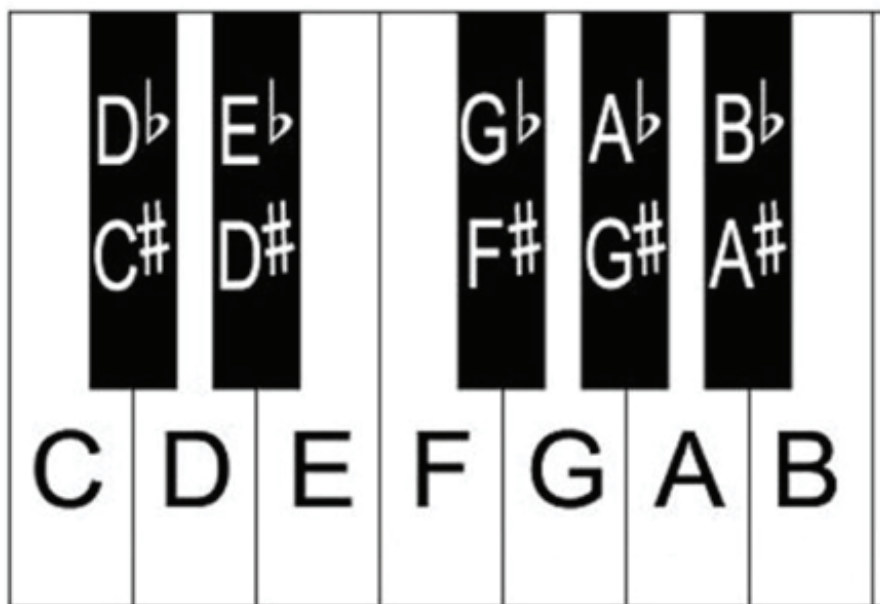
Në këngën e Wu-Tang Clan "Triumph", Inspectah Deck përdorë rimën që bashkëtingëllon:

- "dropping these mockeries"

**Source** - Edwards, P., 2009. How to rap. Chicago Review Press.

### Teoria muzikore

Një shkallë është sekuenca e notave të cilat tingëllojnë mire bashkë. Gati të gjitha këngët e famshme dance janë të kompozuar në një shkallë/notë specifike (zakonisht A-mol).



Një tastierë ka 12 nota (bardh e zi) që përsëriten më lartë dhe më poshtë në tingull deri në fund të tastierës. Një shkallë zakonisht ka shtatë nota dhe merr dy forma: Dur (Maxhor) ose Mol (Minor). Shkallët Dur tingëllojnë më të lumtura dhe optimiste, kurse ato Mol tingëllojnë më të errëta dhe emocionale.

## Shkallët muzikore

### Hapat

Një gjysmë hapi (semitone) është intervali me distancën më të vogël mes dy notave. Për shembull, nota C është një gjysmë-hap më poshtë se C#.

Një hap i plotë është distanca mes dy notave që kanë një notë në mes tyre. Një hap i plotë është i barabartë me dy gjysmë hapa. Për shembull, nota D është një hap i plotë sipër notës C.

### Shkalla Dur (Maxhor)

Në hapa të plotë (P) dhe gjysmë të plotë (G), një shkallë Maxhor përbëhet nga këto formula

**P – P – G – P – P – P – G**

- A maxhor = A, B, C, D, E, F, & G

### Shkalla Minor

Në hapa të plotë dhe gjysmë të plotë, një shkallë Minor përbëhet nga këto formula:

**P – G – P – P – G – P – P**

- A minor = A, B, C, D, E, F, & G

**\*Kur kompozohet muzika dance elektronike ose ajo rap, kompozimi me A-minor është më i lehti sepse përdorë vetëm notat e bardha në tastierë.**

Në mënyrë interesante C Maxhor poashtu përdorë vetëm notat e bardha, por hapat prej notës C dhe sipër shoqërohen nga formula e shkallëve Maxhor. Në shkallën A, A është nota thelbësore, në një shkallë C, C është nota thelbësore. Notat thelbësore janë notat që luhen më shumë në një melodi; luhen zakonisht në fillim ose në fund të një takti ose një seri e takteve (bars).

















\*Një melodi është një sekuençë e notave që luhen njëra pas tjetrës, ndonjëherë me pushime ndërmjet.

Akordet

Akordet janë 3 nota që luhen së bashku me një numër hapash ndërmjet çdo note. Ato përmbajnë 2 forma kryesore, Maxhor dhe Minor. Për të thjeshtësuar, poshtë është një fotografi e të gjitha akordeve që mund të luhen në A-minor.

## Chords In A Minor

<b>A Minor</b> 	<b>A Minor 7th</b> 
<b>B Diminished</b> 	<b>B Minor 7th b5</b> 
<b>C Major</b> 	<b>C Major 7th</b> 
<b>D Minor</b> 	<b>D Minor 7th</b> 
<b>E Minor</b> 	<b>E Minor 7th</b> 
<b>F Major</b> 	<b>F Major 7th</b> 
<b>G Major</b> 	<b>G Major 7th</b> 

## PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

[**Participatory Action Research (PAR)**] is an established research strategy for applied, practice-based social research addressing real-world problems including a variety of methods of engagement, co-creation and co-learning which aim at change (Descombe 2014, p. 123). Its ethos has always been egalitarian, participatory, emancipatory, and democratizing (Somekh 2006; Reason and Bradbury 2008). The method mix traditionally used includes phenomenology (which links to sensory ethnography, Pink 2015), ethnography (specifically, participant observation), and case studies (McTaggart 1997: 38) – all aimed at understanding, as well as transforming, viewpoints and situations of everyone involved as well as highly aware of power structures which shape both viewpoints and situations. Critical reflection, including on unanticipated problems or even failures during the research process, have been recognized as an important part of PAR-based, iterative learning since its inception (McTaggart 1997: 39). In international development, PAR has been linked to making intervention practices, in general, “more powerful, ethical, and transformative”, exactly for its egalitarian and participatory ethos and its critical-reflective potentials (Aragón and Glenzer 2017, p. 3). PAR is always inclusive of, recognizing and crediting, participants’ voice, knowledge, and creativity, thereby providing the space and opportunity for participants to become their own agents and drivers of change (e.g. Somekh 2006; Reason and Bradbury 2008). It thus can be linked to decolonization agendas in research design (Lenette 2021).

The amplification of critical youth voice is an important aim in this (Fenge 2021). This can happen through online presentations, radio shows, blogs, arts exhibitions and other means. However, taking the dissemination and amplification agenda of the creative voice and outputs of the participating young people further forward in RAYS’ specific PAR-case studies, will require additional risk assessment and an updated university ethics approval. This is because of the sensitivities of the project involved and in line with research ethics standards. At present, these demand the anonymization of those youth participants considered ‘beneficiaries’ of the wider intervention set-up (different from the young Albanian facilitators, one of who co-authored this report). The young people and their parents or careers provided explicit permission to RAYS for using the artistic outputs produced as data and source for analysis and evaluation, in academic writing and presentations, as well as for promotional purposes (RAYS Albania runs a regular blog on Medium). The academics involved do so with greatest care and for analytical purposes only, aware of artists’ authorship and in the hope of identifying and promoting further avenues of dissemination under the participants’ names.

PAR typically tends to follow two parallel research aims: on the one hand, improving professional practice and, on the other, improving subjective situations (McTaggart 1997). This partly explains the necessity for a wide net of methodological approaches and data sources, which typically include reflective, (auto-)ethnographic journals or diaries (as used by our young facilitators and collaborators in situ), which document the iterative and complex, ever ongoing, learning process.

Not all PAR is based on the arts. However, in recent years, PAR has increasingly taken recourse to arts-based methods, in short: ‘participatory arts-based methods’, including in

the practice fields of both social work (e.g. Fenge 2021) and international development (e.g. Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2019). Arts-based methods are recognized to offer particularly sensitive means of self-expression for participants, which is considered most important when working with marginalized social groups (Fenge 2021), including young people considered 'at risk' ...

In practice, participatory arts-based projects can create, by their mere existence, new, alternative spaces of belonging, thereby alone contributing to transforming a person's individual situation (Nunn 2022). Generally, in development projects aiming at wider societal repercussions, participatory arts-based research with youth considered vulnerable has been understood to improve social and epistemic justice across both geo-political and country-internal dividing lines marked by prejudice; to strengthen personal resilience as well as critical citizenship and political agency of those discriminated against (Mkwananzi and Cin 2022). Arts-based PAR, specifically, can serve as an apt strategy to amplify the voice of those otherwise "too easily ignored" (Fenge and Hughes, 2022).

\* Excerpt on PAR Methodology borrowed from: Schwandner-Sievers, S.; Amelidis, P.; Ibrahim, I.; and Fisher, E. (2023). *Creating Soundscapes: Draft Evaluation Report of a PAR-led, FAM-pilot workshop with Young People in Shkoder, Albania, Sept 2022*. (planned for publication as Working Paper; currently internal only)