

The Development and Relevance of Mental Health in Music:

A Lyrical Exploration of Chris Cornell, Fiona Apple, and Kendrick Lamar



Abstract

Research is increasingly indicating a growing awareness on the serious repercussions and social relevance of mental health. Where, in the past, dealing with mental health issues was mostly considered taboo, newer generations tend to possess higher mental health literacy, and the consensus seems to be that people are becoming more understanding of one another when it comes to the pursuit of mental stability. However, it is often still faced with stigmas, where people associate it with “weakness” and consider it as “scary”.

Although mental health should be considered a universal issue, there are certain groups, industries and fields of labor that disproportionately are affected by the complications brought on by mental instability. The creative industries, which is often considered to be one of the fastest growing economies, is one of the sectors with the highest rate of documented mental health issues, as the conditions of the working environment are often conducive to mental instability. Consequently, the topic reflects itself in the expression of art and the artists, with a multitude of contemporary musicians speaking out and sharing their struggles through the artistic self-expression of lyrics. Therefore, through the lyrical exploration of Chris Cornell, Fiona Apple, and Kendrick Lamar, all of whom have publicly acknowledged their battle with mental health, this thesis aims to unearth the development of mental health as a topic in music, where the role of an artist as a public figure is taken into consideration, along with the accuracy and level of realism attached to the portrayal of the subject matter. Ultimately, this thesis not only pursues to showcase the increasing prevalence of mental health in music through three relevant and genre-bending discographies, as it also aims to emphasize the potentially important role that influential contemporary artists (i.e. musicians) can have on shaping mental health discourse.

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Introduction

Personal themes of life, death, love, endured hardships and everything in between, are more often than not at the forefront of many contemporary songs. From Bob Dylan to Tracy Chapman, and Curtis Mayfield to Elliot Smith, over the years, the United States have brought forth many of the world's greatest songwriters and storytellers. The musicians are able to articulate attitudes, styles and feelings that are genuine reflections of their own experience and of the social situations that produce those experiences (Landau qtd. in Frith 159). With that, factors outside music, such as lyrics, can elicit complex emotions (Barrett et al. 106), and the artists are able to utilize this to lay bare their personal struggles and experiences in such a way that it can resonate with individuals from all walks of life.

In the context of personal struggles and experiences, mental health is a topic that has become extremely relevant in today's public discourse. In recent years, and increasingly among younger generations, the importance of mental health in a larger social context is being realized, as it ultimately serves as "an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in" (World Health Organization). Generally speaking, newer generations, such as millennials and Generation Z, are considered to have higher levels of mental health literacy, which means that they are better able to identify signs and symptoms, and are generally more regarded to be accepting of others with mental illness (American Psychological Association). Nonetheless, people who struggle with mental health issues are still often misunderstood or faced with judgement due to the ambiguity and complexity surrounding the topic: it is experienced differently from one person to the next, and it can vary extremely in terms of difficulty and caused distress. However, the normalization of the openness surrounding mental health issues is a step in the right direction, and with that, one that translates into the deconstruction of stereotypes and stigmas surrounding the topic. A 2019 study conducted by

the American Psychological Association states that 87% of American adults agree that having a mental health disorder is nothing to be ashamed of. Although these numbers do showcase a step in the right direction, the same study also reports that a third of the respondents agree with the statement, “people with mental health disorders scare me” (American Psychological Association). Moreover, an estimated 25% of the global population will be impacted by poor mental health or mental illness at some point in their lives, and according to the World Economic Forum, mental illness will account for more than half of the economic burden of disease over the next two decades (qtd. in Government of the Netherlands).

The data above provides a glimpse into the severity and importance of mental health, which can be looked at from different angles, ranging from social to economic aspects. However, these numbers provide estimates, which could entail that certain parts of society, including different fields of labor, experience higher numbers of mental health issues. In regard to creativity, there often exist a domain-specific stereotype that is rooted in the belief that creative people are likely to be mentally ill, however, this tends to be an overly general belief about a class of people, strongly linked to the mad-genius stereotype (Silvia and Kaufman 383). The link between creativity and mental hardships is sometimes also strengthened by the artists themselves and the romantic justification of their work: “By playing out the value of suffering, artists highlight the precariousness, the social marginalization, and the economic hardships that result from their profession” (Peters and Roose 959). Nonetheless, despite many authors promoting an association between the two, there remains limited and mixed evidence to associate creativity with mental illness (Waddell 172). However, when looking specifically at the creative and cultural industries as a working field, there are studies that indicate a correlation between employment and mental health problems. Although the creative output can often be uniquely personal, arising through experiences rooted in pain, suffering and vulnerability, it is often the lack of appropriate recognition and the conditions of the working environment that

are conducive to stress and mental health difficulties (Shorter et al. 5). The likelihood of a mental health problem in the creative sector is three times that of the general population, and specific characteristics of the sector as a work environment, such as pressure to reach high standards, irregular work, the perceived lack of value placed on the work and the inadequate financial compensation, are contributing to the likelihood of developing mental health problems (30).¹

In general, people in the creative industries tend to have a significantly higher chance of suffering from mental health issues compared to the general workforce, but how does this compare to musicians? Do they experience high numbers of mental health issues, and is this then reflected in their music? In 2016, the University of Westminster conducted research on mental health issues in the music industry. This study showed that, out of the 2,200 musicians who participated in the survey, 71% has experienced anxiety or panic, and 68.5% has experienced depression, while, according to the Office of National Statistics, the nationwide average of people dealing with anxiety or depression is significantly lower, at 17% (qtd. in Marshall). These numbers highlight the extremity of the music sector, where problems such as anxiety and depression have become almost synonymous with working as a musician. Consequently, the topic of mental health reflects itself in the expression of art and the artists, with many current-day musicians sharing their personal hardships through lyrics: from Kendrick Lamar, Lady Gaga, and Beyoncé to FKA Twigs, Kid Cudi, Father John Misty, and many more.

¹ This paragraph is retrieved and paraphrased from my academic paper *Mental Health in the Music Industry: The Influence of Institutions* for the course Cultural Policy and the Business of Art.

Research Question

Through the paragraphs above we have learned that, among newer generations, mental health is more openly discussed and the overall comprehension is better understood. Furthermore, we have learnt that, compared to the general workforce, musicians experience extremely high numbers of mental health issues. However, can there also be an identifiable “evolutionary” correlation between the two? Does the openness about mental health issues among newer generations translate itself into a more frequent inclusion of mental health in song lyrics? Meaning that, across different generations and time-periods, the inclusion of mental health as a lyrical topic has become more prevalent with time? With that, this thesis aims to unearth how the representation of mental health in North American popular music has evolved. Through the exploration of three specific artists, spanning different, yet adjacent, time periods, and by looking at the presence of the theme in song lyrics, I aspire to uncover how the topic of mental health in music has shifted over the years. Has the topic of mental health genuinely become more mainstream in music? If so, what importance does the inclusion of mental health in lyrics hold in regard to the potentially far-reaching influence of artists? And does the topical inclusion of mental health in popular music have positive or negative effects on the listeners in shaping mental health discourse? Although these are simply some of the questions that arise when thinking of the theme at hand, my thesis, due to the limited scope, does not aim to offer definitive answers to these questions. However, it does strive to contribute to the overall discussion of mental health and music, along with signifying differences directly related to the chosen case studies, explored from multiple angles, and in doing so, identifying aspects that could be indicative of changes in the topical inclusion of mental health in music. In this regard, the research question reads as followed: *How has the mental health representation in North American popular music, through the artistic self-expression of lyrics, evolved from the 1980s to the present-day?*

Artists

The first of the three artists that I will analyze is Chris Cornell, born in 1964, and active as a musician since 1984. Throughout his career, Cornell worked with bands such as Soundgarden, Temple of the Dog, and Audioslave, while releasing music as a solo artist all the way up until his untimely passing in 2017. Throughout Cornell's career he never limited himself to the boundaries and sound of the Grunge era that he came up in, as he went on to make music that was driven by his personal love for a wide range of music.

The second artist that I will focus on is Fiona Apple, born in 1977, and active as a professional musician since the mid-90s. Over the span of her career Apple has released five albums, with 2020s *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* being the most recent one. I personally would describe her music as strikingly raw and enigmatically beautiful. The music features components from all sorts of genres: from rock, indie and soul to alternative and jazz.

The third and final chapter will focus on Kendrick Lamar, born in 1987 and breaking through as one of hip-hop's biggest success stories in the late 2000s. Kendrick Lamar is hailed for his, often autobiographical, songwriting ability, in which he speaks on many important topics: from civil rights to mental health. Lamar has released five studio albums, of which *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers* is the most recent one, being released in 2022. Much like the previously mentioned artists, Lamar is able to break the boundaries of musical genres, with each album featuring a distinctively unique sound that is ultimately influenced by a broad range of music.

In choosing these different artists I do not claim them to be representative of an entire musical period or genre; however, I do implicate that they are indicative as a reference point in musical history. With that, the reasoning for these particular artists is, at least to a certain extent, rooted in personal interest, nonetheless, that should not diminish their relevance in regard to the topic, as there are several components that connect these artists, even beyond the topical

inclusion of mental health in music. The individual chapters will contain additional information on the justification of the particular artists, however; the three artists in question are all considered to be in creative control, meaning that they are deciding the lyrical, musical, and overall artistic direction. Furthermore, they all navigate(d) within the sound that has come to represent those respective time periods, yet were all able to break those boundaries and establish a successful career through developing their own personal sound. Therefore, one would not do these artists justice by tying them to a particular genre, as they are very much the embodiment of musical diversity. All in all, Cornell (1964), Apple (1977) and Lamar (1987) are artists who, in terms of sound and background, are distinctive of one another, yet share a multitude of commonalities in regard to creativity and artistry.

Theory

In recent years there has been a growing interest into the relation between emotion and music, with studies indicating that music triggers emotions in 55% to 65% of all listening experiences (Juslin qtd in. Barradas and Sakka 650). On a comprehensive level, there are several stages that underlie the induction of musical emotions, and the combination of music and lyrics offer a complementary means of communicating emotions (Juslin 85). Lyrics in music can facilitate the exploration of feelings, problems, and difficulties (Hargreaves qtd in. Barradas and Sakka 651), while being able to reinforce the connection between genre subcultures and attitudes, along with increasing the availability of prosocial beliefs, elevate interpersonal empathy, and foster helping behavior (Greitemeyer qtd in. Barradas and Sakka 651). Ultimately, lyrics in music have the potential to influence people's behavior, and listeners might therefore purposely seek out lyrics that are perceived as thoughtful and emotional (Stratton and Zalanowski qtd in. Barradas and Sakka 651). In this regard, the argument can be made that lyrics are, at least to a certain extent, a cultural product, whereas it can correspond to

collectivist and individualist mindsets, through which it may relate to people's use of music in their daily life. According to research by Susino and Schubert, lyrics are interpreted differently by cultures that differ in terms of individualism and collectivism, thus, the music produced in, for example, the US is therefore more explicit in terms of lyrical themes, oftentimes related to the distinctiveness of individuality and particularity. In this regard, the lyrical content is often created from a personal perspective, with the intention and ability to resonate with the listener. Further research suggests that when cultural meanings are shared, emotional ideas are more likely to be communicated, and therefore, the cultural differences in prevalent lyrical themes may influence the emotions that these themes evoke (Health et al. qtd. in Barradas and Sakka 664). Accordingly, a potential surge in the presence of mental health related lyrics in music could serve as a reflection of the culture and generations for which the music is created.

Generally speaking, studies support the idea that lyrics are more important for the arousal of sad emotions in music (Brattico et al. qtd. in Barradas and Sakka 653). However, when strictly looking at the themes of lyrics, regardless of their arousal of certain emotional aspects, popular music has evolved over time. Above I stated that research has indicated a normalization of openness towards mental health issues by newer generations, and although this thesis aims to explore whether or not the topical exploration of mental health in song lyrics has increased in accordance to the aforementioned openness, it is also interesting to look at how song lyrics have changed in a general sense, as this can perhaps already indicate the likelihood of the aforementioned topical inclusion of mental health. A quantitative sentiment analysis of popular music conducted by Napier and Shamir, in which 6,150 Billboard hot 100 songs from 1951 through 2016 were analyzed, indicates numerous changes in lyrics over the years. The tone in popular music lyrics has shifted significantly, with themes of anger, disgust, fear, sadness, tentativeness, and conscientiousness having increased over time (Napier and Shamir 161). Consequently, the study indicates a clear trend towards a more negative tone in pop music

lyrics, which can partially be explained by changes in social values, reflected through changes in mainstream popular music (173). Furthermore, in line with the dominant negative tone in popular music, a content analysis of substances mentioned in popular music lyrics showcases that the average adolescent is exposed to approximately 84 references to explicit substance use daily in popular songs (Primack et al. 2). However, despite data suggesting that popular music is generally becoming increasingly negative in individualistic cultures, the majority of the analyzed songs contained positive consequences of substance use, with social pressure being the main motivation for the representation (5). Nonetheless, the mentions of substance use and abuse can often still be rooted in a negative undertone, as mentions of substances as motivation for mood management and addiction are not uncommon (5). In this regard, the mentions of substances in popular music becomes closely linked to the general discourse on mental health, as research by the National Institute on Drug Abuse reports comorbidities, with data suggesting that substance use disorders often co-occur with mental illness (2). Moreover, the study suggests that mental illness can exacerbate drug use and addiction by alleviating the unpleasant symptoms of a mental disorder, similar as to how substance use can contribute to the development of mental health issues, as it can lead to changes in some of the same brain areas that are disrupted in other mental disorders (7). Correspondingly, it becomes increasingly prevalent to argue that particular mentions of substance use in song lyrics can be indicative of mental health issues, with the context in which it is mentioned playing an important role in the interpretation of it.

Knowing that song lyrics in popular music are becoming increasingly negative, and knowing that mentions of substance use and abuse are more frequently featured and can allude to the existence or development of mental health issues, one is bound to wonder how this impacts the listener. In general, words matter, and especially when dealing with a topic as serious as mental health, an accurate and informative representation is important. Whether we

are referring to music or any other form of popular media, the creators are often viewed as celebrities, thus exerting a certain sense of influence over the listener, viewer, or reader. In this regard, the role of media in the portrayal of their psychiatric illnesses can often unearth itself in a dangerous fashion, as for example, media reporting of celebrity suicides can lead to an augmentation in copycat suicides, a phenomenon historically known as the Werther effect (Calhoun and Gold 237). Furthermore, the general public gets the majority of their mental health education from entertainment (Fawcett), as such, the way in which it is represented becomes increasingly important. Therefore, openness of musicians about their personal battles with mental health, depending on the context in which it is provided, can likely contribute to the advancement of mental health discourse. Particularly pertaining to groups that are often underrepresented in both the media and mental health treatment, the willingness of cultural creators to utilize their celebrity identity to speak on mental health issues can be beneficial, as the underrepresented groups are at heightened risk for not identifying with current mental illness portrayals (National Alliance on Mental Illness). For this reason, musicians and their music can play a role in the awareness surrounding the general mental health discourse, as they often have a large and powerful platform at their disposal on which they can utilize their influence and intersectional identities to lift up underserved groups, and help portray realistic images of mental health, thus making it identifiable, accessible, and relatable (Calhoun and Gold 240). Additionally, research has found that, among students, the introduction of contact with celebrities' self-disclosures with mental illness decreased the stigma towards mental illness while increasing the likelihood of getting help (Ferrari 329). Ultimately, stigma is best reduced through contact with people of likeable status (Corrigan and Penn qtd. in Ferrari 329), and the fondness one has for a particular celebrity figure impacts the desire to identify with an individual (Brown et al. qtd in Ferrari 332). Therefore, regardless of whether or not the topical inclusion of mental health in song lyrics has increased over time, the sheer inclusion of it can

already greatly impact attitude change and contribute to the normalization of mental health discourse.

Consequently, the theoretical information provided in the paragraphs above offer detailed insights into the aspects that are required to answer the stated research question and sub-questions. First and foremost, by highlighting the relevance of lyrics in relation to the exploration and communication of emotions, along with its ability to foster helping behavior and influence prosocial beliefs, it becomes evident that lyrical expression serves a purpose beyond audible joy, with the potential to propel social change and destigmatize outdated taboos. Furthermore, by acquiring insights into the role and influence of celebrities (e.g. mainstream musicians) on public discourse, along with the potential impact of lyrics in guiding listeners, the development of the emotional tone in mainstream music, and the increasing frequency of substance use as well as the related association with mental health, all of which are already briefly mentioned, it becomes easier to identify interesting characteristics featured within the analyses. With this I mean that, to be able to look at the development of the inclusion of mental health in song lyrics, along with the importance it holds and the possible effects on shaping mental health discourse, it is essentially crucial to grasp these concepts. For example, knowing the existing relation between substance use and mental health in specific circumstances, such as usage with the main or sole purpose of alleviating and dismissing mental pain, simplifies the process of analyzing and interpreting lyrics that describe a related sentiment. In this regard, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* will be utilized to determine the accuracy of mental health descriptions in music, and combined with the available information on the previously described aspects, allows for a better look at the possible impact of the identified lyrics; do they offer a realistic portrayal? From which perspective is it told? Are stigmas confronted? And are underrepresented groups mirrored in the particular lyrics? Essentially, the lyrical analysis provides insights into these various aspects, whereas the theoretical aspects then

help inform and decide the importance and relevance in regard to the influence of artists on listeners and the contribution, either positive or negative, to the general mental health discourse.

Method

Lyrics can be subjective, and therefore can be interpreted differently by different listeners, thus making it more difficult to make a precise measurement of the intention and tone. However, because lyrics are textual, they can be both blatantly obvious and cryptic. Therefore, in order to identify the frequency of mental health mentions in song lyrics across the discography of Chris Cornell, Fiona Apple, and Kendrick Lamar, several coding categories have been created. Within these coding categories, lyrics conveying negative emotional sentiment are identified based on the emotion typology developed by Desmet and Fokkinga, which functions as a systematic classification of emotions according to their differences and similarities. Within the typology, 36 of the emotions are negative, ranging from anger and indignation to sadness and desperation. The 36 negative emotions (see appendix) can elicit one another, and are used to offer emotional granularity, as being able to recognize nuanced differences between emotions is essential in analyzing the lyrics and determining their sentiment and relevance.

Within the identifiable negative emotional sentiments, relevant lyrics are then further analyzed for specific references to the coding categories. The coding categories are partially informed by previous research into the mental health discourse in popular rap music (Kresovich et al. 288), and are divided into the most common collective mental health disorders in the US, categorized under anxiety disorders and depression. Furthermore, suicidal ideation makes up the third category, as the presence often implies mental health related struggles, in addition to being a leading cause of death in many countries, and a 2021 study reporting that over 12.3 million adults aged 18 or older in the US had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 43). The fourth category, mental health metaphor, accounts for the lyrics that are considered too ambiguous to interpret as a specific reference to one of the latter three categories, thus encompassing general references that allude to a struggle with mental stability. The categories of anxiety and depression are developed using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, according to which anxiety is commonly regarded to encompass disorders that share features of excessive fear and anxiety and related behavioral disturbances, which can be differentiated by close examination of the types of situations that are feared or avoided and the content of the associated thoughts or beliefs (American Psychiatric Association 830-831). Whereas depressive disorders share the common feature of the presence of sad, empty, or irritable mood, accompanied by somatic and cognitive changes that significantly affect the individual's capacity to function (695). Below (see table 1), the categories can be found, including a description and examples of lyrics by Cornell, Apple, and Lamar.

Table 1

Mental health reference, lyric description, and examples

Coding category / mental health reference	Lyric description	Lyric example
Anxiety disorder / anxious thinking	Experiencing fear and anxiety, often accompanied with excessive worry, nervousness and unease, due to uncertainty	"Now I'm affected, twenty years later trauma has resurfaced, amplified as I write this song, I shiver 'cause I'm, nervous" (Kendrick Lamar)
Depressive disorder / depressive thinking	Feeling sad, down, irritable and empty, causing a loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed	"I've been dealing with depression ever since an adolescent" (Kendrick Lamar)
Suicidal ideation / self-harm	Directly referring or alluding to taking one's own life or severely harming oneself	"I stared at you and cut myself, that's all I do because I'm not free" (Fiona Apple)
Mental health metaphor	General reference to struggling with or lacking mental stability	"I just looked in the mirror, and things aren't looking so good, I'm looking California and feeling Minnesota" (Chris Cornell)

The individual chapters, which all center around one of the three aforementioned artists, each contain extensive information on the musicians and are structured in a similar order. Moreover, the chapters are in chronological order, meaning that the first analysis will revolve around Chris Cornell, and the second and third analyses will revolve around Fiona Apple and Kendrick Lamar, respectively. The chapters start off by providing general background information, including the artists musical history and relation to mental health. This is followed by a thorough description and justification of the chosen case studies (i.e. the created selection of albums and songs) for the analyses. From there on the chapters flow into the exploration of the lyrics, which consist of chronological descriptions of the selected albums and their analyzed lyrics, including examples of mental health references, along with information on the identified categorizations. The chapters conclude with a brief discussion of the overall results, thus providing an overview of the development of the prevalence of mental health references in the analyzed discographies, along with information of the portrayal of the topic at hand, and additional noteworthy comments related to the individual artists and chapters. Moreover, although the analyses included in the chapters provide detailed information on the identified lyrics, it does not offer the capacity to extensively highlight all the categorizations and accompanying verses and lines. Therefore, a separate document with excel files, containing all the analyzed albums, along with the songwriting credits, and all identified lyrics relating to mental health, has been created (see attachment). Even though the chapters are understandable without the supplemental excel sheets, they could nonetheless provide additional insights into the songs and lyrics that are not highlighted in the individual chapters.

Chapter 1

A Lyrical Exploration of Chris Cornell's Music

Chris Cornell (Seattle, 20 July 1964 – Detroit, 18 May 2017), born Christopher John Boyle, was an American singer, songwriter, and musician. Throughout his professional music career, spanning over 30 years, Cornell functioned as the lead vocalist, rhythm guitarist and primary lyricist for the bands Soundgarden, Audioslave, and the one-off tribute band Temple of the Dog. During the 1980s and 1990s Soundgarden had their most prolific era, releasing five studio albums: *Ultramega*, *OK* (1988), *Louder than Love* (1989), *Badmotorfinger* (1991), *Superunknown* (1994), and *Down on the Upside* (1996). In 2012 the band reunited one last time, releasing their final studio album *King Animal*. In 1991, together with what eventually would become Pearl Jam, *Temple of the Dog* was released, serving as a tribute to Andrew Wood, and featuring 10 songs predominantly written by Cornell. Sonically the album moved away from the metal-influenced sound of Soundgarden, featuring more melodic and ballad-like songs, thus serving as Cornell's first foray into the exploration of genre and sound. During the period between 2001 and 2006, Cornell joined three former members of Rage Against the Machine to form the supergroup Audioslave. Together they released *Audioslave* (2002), *Out of Exile* (2005) and *Revelations* (2006), with their musical style generally being regarded as a mixture of hard rock, alternative metal and post-grunge rock: "rock rhythms with blistering bluesy guitar riffs that blend '70s hard rock – think Led Zeppelin and Bad Company – with the '90s grunge sound of Nirvana and Soundgarden" (Neven). However, in between Soundgarden and Audioslave, Cornell established himself as a solo artist, releasing his debut, *Euphoria Morning*, in 1999. With his solo output Cornell showcased his diversity to the world, experimenting with many different sounds and genres, while drawing inspiration from a multitude of artists; from Prince to the Beatles. In doing so, he demonstrated the versatility of his voice, which is best described

as a baritone with endless reserves of breath and the seething tension of contained power, with the ability to sail above the grunge barrage and give modest acoustic ballads an existential gravity (Pareles). Furthermore, his solo output relied heavily on his ability to write songs, illustrating to the world his extended capacity to unearth the complexity of human emotions through clever wordplay, metaphorical references, and personal elements, as he described everything from pain and anger to love and death. After breaking up with Audioslave, Cornell started releasing more solo albums with *Carry On* (2007), *Scream* (2009), *Higher Truth* (2015), and the posthumously released *No One Sings Like You Anymore* (2020), which features ten covers sequenced and recorded by Cornell in 2016. From the psychedelic folk-rock sound on *Euphoria Morning* to the pop-oriented production of Timbaland on *Scream*, Cornell's solo ventures lay bare his ability to navigate the musical landscape with a graceful ease.

Through the six albums with Soundgarden, one album with Temple of the Dog, three albums with Audioslave, and five solo albums, Cornell has had an extremely productive career in which he accomplished many accolades. Often viewed as the chief-architect of the 90s-grunge movement, Cornell ultimately achieved multi-platinum success with three different bands, selling over 30 million records worldwide (Chris Cornell Estate), receiving 3 Grammy Awards and 18 nominations (Recording Academy), alongside being a Golden Globe nominated composer and lyricist, writing songs for James Bond's *Casino Royale*, *12 Years a Slave*, *Machine Gun Preacher*, and *The Promise*, among others. Furthermore, Cornell was an avid supporter of equality and justice, often speaking out and raising funds for charitable organizations in order to help the world's most vulnerable. Since Cornell's passing, his wife Vicky Cornell has vowed to build on his commitment to raise awareness and assist at risk children around the world, along with supporting nonprofits that provide intensive therapeutic mental health and developmental services for children and their families (Chris Cornell Estate).

Looking back on Cornell's career, it would be more than fair to consider him a voice of a generation, able to break boundaries, set trends, innovate and experiment, and impact millions of lives through the confluence of his incredible four-octave range and impeccable songwriting capability. Yet, despite his impactful career and ever-lasting legacy, it did not always seem to be headed in that direction, as Cornell's upbringing was fairly tumultuous. Nonetheless, throughout his childhood, and despite a lack of formal musical education, Cornell carried an affinity with music; from his first attempts at songwriting on a brushed-black painted piano at the age of 8 to learning how to play "Sunshine on My Shoulders" by John Denver on his brother's guitar, and pursuing a sustained campaign of pleading to convince his mom to allow a drum kit in the household (Reiff 16). However, at a young age, Cornell was already faced with mental health issues: "I remember having more fun when I was nine, because I hadn't started becoming depressed yet. At eleven, you wake up one day and start feeling bad about everything." (qtd. in Reiff 14). Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, Cornell experimented with a variety of illicit substances nearly every day: weed, pills, alcohol—whatever was available that could alter his state of mind (Reiff 16). This continued as he got older, leading to a traumatic experience with PCP, leaving him with a panic disorder and a complete overhaul in lifestyle: "There were about two years where I was more or less agoraphobic and didn't deal with anybody" (Cornell qtd. in Reiff 18). Nonetheless, it was during this period that Cornell became acquainted with a wide variety of artistry, listening to a near-constant rotation of music, from Alice Cooper and Pink Floyd to Uriah Heep and Jimi Hendrix, but it was not until he discovered blue-collar punk groups like Wire, the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, and the Stooges, when he realized that he could be a musician (19). While pursuing a musical career in the early 80s, Cornell worked a variety of different jobs, and struggled to find a stable musical partnership, featuring in over 10 bands in the Seattle region (23). However, during this period he met Kim Thayil and Hiro Yamamoto, with whom he created Soundgarden in 1984. As

Soundgarden garnered more success and became an established band, especially in the Seattle music scene, Cornell's depression, anxiety, mixed mood states and addictions continued to be prevalent. In a 1996 interview Cornell stated he knows what it is like to feel suicidal and hopeless (Doreian), and the autonomous and recurrent bouts of severe depression were painfully intensified by his intermittent alcohol and substance abuse (Schwartz 39). For Cornell, substance abuse was a way to isolate himself from all his other relationships, ultimately leading him to enter rehab in 2002 (SPIN). Throughout his entire life Cornell faced many mental health issues, and in the early hours of May 18, 2017, right after performing a show with Soundgarden in Detroit, he was found dead in his hotel room. Despite his tragic and unfortunate ending, Cornell was able to turn his pain into art, and through that, touch the lives of many people across the globe, with a legacy that will continue to inspire. With that, his personal struggles served as fuel for his art, and as said by Pearl Jam bassist and former member of Temple of the Dog Jeff Ament, in regard to Cornell's lyrics: "he obviously was processing his pain and depression, and all of those things. I think that's part of what people, myself included, responded to when he was singing" (qtd. in NBA Soundsystem).

Selection of Discography

In the frame of reference of mental health and music, it is important to briefly look at which albums and songs I will analyze, in addition to offering an explanation into my reasoning behind the created selection of Chris Cornell's discography. As mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter, Cornell has released a tremendous amount of music throughout his decades spanning career, releasing hundreds of songs across over a dozen studio albums. Within the release of studio albums there are often multiple version available; from deluxe editions to exclusive bonus tracks, only available on certain platforms. In this regard, I have chosen to adhere to the track listing of the original releases, ultimately deriving the album, song names,

songwriting credits and lyrics from the versions available on Apple Music, which are the versions that are widely accessible across streaming platforms and retail stores. However, within these albums, there are other aspects that also need to be taken into account, think of songs that are covers of other artists, or songs not written by Chris Cornell. Generally speaking, Cornell was credited as a songwriter on nearly every song that he performed, with a few exceptions here and there. On *Ultramega OK*, three out of the 13 songs do not credit Chris Cornell as a songwriter, as they were either covers of artists such as Howlin' Wolf and John Lennon, along with a song written by the other members of Soundgarden. On both *Louder Than Love* and *King Animal* one song has been written by another member of Soundgarden, with Cornell contributing to all the other songs. Whereas on *Badmotorfinger*, *Superunknown* and *Down on the Upside*, Cornell did not contribute to the lyrics of two songs, meaning that across the six albums released by Soundgarden, 11 songs do not credit Cornell as a songwriter, of which nine were written by a variety of band members. However, that pertains only to the songs released with Soundgarden, as Cornell, across his entire discography, has many more songwriting credits to his name. On *Temple of the Dog* Cornell is credited as the main songwriter across all 10 songs, with several contributions from the other band members. Moreover, on the three albums released with Audioslave, all four members of the group are credited as songwriters, although it is generally regarded that Cornell was responsible for writing the lyrics to the songs within a collaborative setting, allowing all members to bring in input to see an idea to fruition (Wilk qtd. in Murphy). On Cornell's solo output, which spans five albums, he is responsible for the majority of the lyrics, nonetheless, there are several songs written by other artists. On *Euphoria Morning*, Cornell's first solo album, he is credited as a songwriter on all songs, with additional contributions from other songwriters across multiple tracks. On *Carry On*, Cornell is credited as the main songwriter on all but one song, as the album includes a cover of "Billie Jean", written by Michael Jackson. However, *Scream*, which

highlighted Cornell's ability to explore different genres, features many songwriters across all songs, with Timbaland and Cornell being credited as co-writers across all of them. Whereas on 2015's *Higher Truth*, Cornell was responsible for all the songwriting, with no additional contributions. Finally, 2020s posthumously released *No One Sings Like You Anymore* does not credit Cornell as a songwriter on any of the songs featured on the album, as it is a collection of covers performed and sequenced by Cornell, thus including songs written by artists such as Prince, Harry Nilsson, John Lennon and more.

In the paragraph above I have provided a quick run-through of Cornell's songwriting credits across the 15 studio albums released as a solo artist, with Soundgarden, Temple of the Dog and Audioslave. Based on the information mentioned above, and derived from the songwriting credits, I have made a selection of the songs on the albums that will be included in the analysis. On the next page (see table 2), a chronological list of all the albums included in the analysis has been made, stating which songs will be omitted. Furthermore, not all the albums are included, as two of Cornell's solo albums have been omitted. First and foremost, as previously mentioned, Cornell's posthumously released *No One Sings Like You Anymore* is a collection of covers, and therefore only contains songs written by other artists, essentially meaning that the exploration of the lyrics featured on this album would not contribute to the overall analysis. Furthermore, *Scream*, Cornell's third solo album, will also not be part of the analysis. *Scream* was created under different circumstances than Cornell was usually accustomed to, having a team continuously working on every aspect of the recording process for a period of six weeks, from songwriting to recording:

It was a situation where we were kind of writing for beats and recording vocals and other instruments all the time, as opposed to writing songs and working them out and rehearsing the songs and playing with a live band, which is how I am more used to doing things. (Cornell qtd. in Nichols)

Although Cornell did contribute to the songwriting process on each and every song featured on *Scream*, it is ultimately a collaborative effort between Cornell and Timbaland, with the duo writing and recording the entire album together. Therefore, unlike the other songs across Cornell's discography that feature co-writers in the credits, the songs on *Scream* are the result of a group of people simultaneously working together on various aspects of the album, making it impossible for me to credit Cornell as the main lyricists on the songs, as it is not clear who contributed which aspect.

Table 2

Albums and omitted songs²

Album:	Artist:	Year:	Track(s) omitted:	Reasoning:
<i>Ultramega, OK</i>	Soundgarden	1988	7, 9, 13	Contains songs written by others.
<i>Louder Than Love</i>	Soundgarden	1889	8	Contains songs written by others.
<i>Temple of the Dog</i>	Temple of the Dog	1991	-	-
<i>Badmotorfinger</i>	Soundgarden	1991	6, 8	Contains songs written by others.
<i>Superunknown</i>	Soundgarden	1994	6, 14	Contains songs written by others.
<i>Down on the Upside</i>	Soundgarden	1996	10, 15	Contains songs written by others.
<i>Euphoria Morning</i>	Chris Cornell	1999	-	-
<i>Audioslave</i>	Audioslave	2002	-	
<i>Out of Exile</i>	Audioslave	2005	-	
<i>Revelations</i>	Audioslave	2006	-	
<i>Carry On</i>	Chris Cornell	2007	8	Contains a cover.
<i>King Animal</i>	Soundgarden	2012	8	Contains songs written by others.
<i>Higher Truth</i>	Chris Cornell	2015	-	-

² *Ultramega, OK* contains two covers of songs of which the songwriting is credited to Howlin' Wolf and John Lennon. The rest of the omitted tracks, except for the cover of Billie Jean on *Carry On*, are all songs written by other members of Soundgarden.

Analysis

Throughout the analysis of the 13 selected albums, Cornell demonstrated his varied penmanship, speaking on a variety of topics; from vivid and direct descriptions of a mental struggle in a song such as Audioslave's "Nothing Left to Say but Goodbye", where he sings "I killed myself, threw away my mental health / But nobody was blinking an eye / Backyard, basement, falling on the pavement / Nothing left to say but goodbye" (1:42 – 1:53), to cryptic and poetic metaphors describing feelings of loneliness, immobility and pessimism on a song such as "Circling": "Lonely hours of a moonless night / Just like a stray dog in the rain / I can run all night and get nowhere" (1:57 – 2:13). Generally speaking, Cornell did not shy away from his mental health issues, as many of the lyrics throughout his decades-spanning musical output either directly refer to the experience of a mental struggle or allude to it by offering many metaphorical lines. However, before going into detail about the frequency of the mentions and the development of it in time, it is important to briefly tackle the difficulties that were faced when analyzing the lyrics. Throughout his career, Cornell was known to be a songwriter who had a fairly cryptic writing style, "where it is difficult to derive any one interpretation from his lyrics" (Genius). During the analysis this proved to be an issue that frequently had to be addressed, as many of the verses throughout the songs contain imaginative descriptions of dark themes, thus offering room for various interpretations. In this regard, to assure that the lyrics would be analyzed as accurately as possible, certain measurements were taken. When faced with a cryptic lyric that leaves room for interpretation, available information on the particular song was thoroughly researched. This means that in particular cases interviews from Cornell and his collaborators were used to justify a particular categorization of a specific lyric. Whenever there was no additional information available on the lyrics, the context of the song in which the lyric was presented ultimately helped to determine whether or not a specific line could and should be categorized. These cases were

present in multitude, and this can perhaps best be illustrated through the example of “Like Suicide”, which serves as the closing track on *Superunknown*. The title of the song already strongly alludes to it, and when listening to the song itself it feels fairly obvious to state that the song deals with mental health topics, as it gives the idea that it revolves around suicidal ideation. However, when taking a closer look at the actual lyrics, along with Cornell’s explanation of it, it becomes evident that this is not a song about mental health, nor does it serve as a metaphor:

The narrative is not a metaphor. It’s a big moment that happened while I was recording the song. I had all the music and was recording a demo arrangement in my basement. And when I came upstairs, I heard a thud against the window, and it was a female robin that had fallen into the window and broke her neck, and was just lying there. When I went back down to finish recording, I decided that would be the lyrics to the song. As much as it sounds like I’m singing about a person and the metaphor is sort of the bird in flight and then [it] dies ... it was literal. (Cornell qtd. in Grow)

This particular example is simply one of many, nonetheless, it does exemplify the importance of the context and the available information on the songs in analyzing the particular lyrics. Although lyrics can certainly carry meaning to listeners beyond the author’s intention, as a study in the attribution of emotion and meaning to song lyrics suggests that personal associations implied by familiar music are attributed to the accompanying lyrics, thus leading to particular song lyrics being perceived as more meaningful to an individual (Thompson and Russo 51). Nevertheless, taking into account individual interpretations of song lyrics on a large scale can bring forth many theoretical implications, as one could argue that, due to the individual experience and emotional relation attached to a particular song, the interpretations can be infinite. That is not to say that the analysis is completely oblivious to individual interpretation and song meaning beyond the authors intention, however, it is intended to specify

that, in the cases where the song lyrics are not conclusive enough to be categorized, or carry too much ambiguity in its use of allegories or metaphors, the available information on the extratextual evidence of the authors intention is prioritized. Furthermore, because Cornell was such an eloquent yet enigmatic lyricist, many of the lines that alluded to a mental health reference actually transgressed beyond one particular category, meaning that they contained specific words or descriptions of identifiable emotions that strongly indicate an allusion to a mental state and overall emotional wellbeing, without clearly fitting the description of a specific category. Consequently, when faced with a lyric that clearly insinuates a mental health reference, yet is surrounded by too much ambiguity due to the lyrical craftsmanship, the specific line then counts as a mental health metaphor, as this is ultimately the category in which the general references to a struggle with mental stability have been designated according to the classifications discussed in the methodology (see table 1).

Across the albums, a total of 156 mental health references were identified. A complete overview of the statistics can be found in table 3 (see page 28), including the total categorical mentions per album and the calculated average of each album. Within the 156 references, the vast majority falls under the fourth category, which is the designated category for general references to struggling with or lacking mental stability. The probable reason why this category far exceeds the others has to do with the confluence of the elements mentioned in the previous paragraph; context and mystifying pencraft. However, the other categories were still prevalent throughout the analyzed discography, as 29 mentions of the second category, depressive disorder and depressive thinking, were found across the albums, with an average of 2.23 mentions on each album. The third category, suicidal ideation and self-harm, had a total of 26 mentions across the albums, with an average of two on each individual album. This category for example includes lines such as the one that can be heard on the track “Worried Moon”, which serves as the third track on *Higher Truth*; “If it all goes wrong / And I'm a heart without

a home / Maybe you can talk me out / Of doing myself in” (1:20 – 1:32). Furthermore, the first category, which specifically looks at lyrics containing references to anxiety disorders and anxious thinking, was identified the least, as there were 8 mentions across the albums, with an average of 0.62 per album. The reason why this category is significantly less present than the other three has to do with similar reasons as the ones explained for the fourth category, as many lyrics alluded to a form of anxiety, yet were too inconclusive, and therefore ruled as a metaphor. An example from the song “Fell on Black Days” on *Superunknown* perhaps best showcases the difficult classification of the first category, as this particular verse has been categorized as a reference to anxious thinking due to the descriptive emotions of fear and worry, yet it could just as easily have been categorized as a general reference to a struggle with mental stability: “Whatsoever I feared has come to light / And whatsoever I've fought off became my life / Just when every day seemed to greet me with a smile / Sunspots have faded, now I'm doin' time, now I'm doin' time” (00:16 – 00:45).

Aside from an overview of the statistics derived from the analysis, it is also important to look at how the frequency of mental health references has developed with time. The first studio album that contained songs written by Cornell was Soundgarden's *Ultramega OK*, which was released in 1988, while the last album containing songs written by Cornell was *Higher Truth*, released in 2015. So, then the question remains how the mental health references have changed in between this 37-year period; have they gradually increased with time, or have they actually declined? To provide insight into this, the paragraphs that follow will describe the analyzed albums and prevalence of mentions.

Table 3

Mental health references across the 13 analyzed albums³

Album:	Category 1: Anxious thinking	Category 2: Depressive thinking	Category 3: Suicidal ideation	Category 4: Metaphor	Total:
<i>Ultramega, OK</i>				3	3
<i>Louder Than Love</i>				3	3
<i>Temple of the Dog</i>		2	1	5	8
<i>Badmotorfinger</i>		3	1	6	10
<i>Superunknown</i>	2	2	2	7	13
<i>Down on the Upside</i>		2	7	7	16
<i>Euphoria Morning</i>	1	7	1	12	21
<i>Audioslave</i>		1	2	12	15
<i>Out of Exile</i>			2	5	7
<i>Revelations</i>	1	6	1	5	13
<i>Carry On</i>	2	1	4	11	18
<i>King Animal</i>			1	5	6
<i>Higher Truth</i>	2	5	4	12	23
Total:	8	29	26	93	156
Average:	0.62	2.23	2	7.15	12

1980s and 1990s

The first decade, the 1980s, saw two studio releases with *Ultramega, OK* in 1988, and *Louder Than Love* in 1989. Both these albums were released by Soundgarden, with most of the tracks being written by Chris Cornell, a few exceptions excluded (see table 2). Although Cornell was responsible for the majority of the lyrics, the music created by Soundgarden at the time did not by definition focus on the songwriting, as the early days of the band were mostly absorbed by the audible instrumental, rather than the lyrical content. Nonetheless, the early work does already provide an insight into what is to come, as it showcases Cornell's early foray into songwriting. This becomes clear on several songs throughout both albums, as both *Ultramega,*

³ This table provides an overview of all the mentions and the average of the categories across the 13 albums. It does not provide an average of each album, and the numbers showcased are rounded up or down according to the general rules.

OK and *Louder Than Love* contain three mental health references, of which all serve as metaphors. From clear references to a conflict of the mind on “Ugly Truth”; “I painted my eyes / Ugly isn't what I want to see / I painted my mind / Ugly isn't what I want to be” (01:23 – 01:43), to lines alluding to feelings of loneliness and desperation on “Mood for Trouble”; “I did not want to fight / I did not want to kill / I wanted to be real / I wanted to believe / That I was not the only one alive” (02:50 – 03:24). Although these lyrics remain cryptic and do not tackle mental health issues head on, they do allude to the mental struggles and dark thought-pattern that surrounded Cornell, which becomes even more prevalent in the future continuation of the musical output. With that, the studio albums released in the 80s saw an average of 3 references per album.

The 1990s were an extremely productive decade for Chris Cornell, as he released three studio albums with Soundgarden; *Badmotorfinger* in the later part of 1991, *Superunknown* in 1994, and *Down on the Upside* in 1996. Furthermore, he also released *Temple of the Dog* during the first half of 1991, along with his first solo album *Euphoria Morning* in 1999. With five studio albums released in the 1990s, it marks one of Cornell’s most prolific decades. Moreover, it also marks the decade that saw Cornell evolving, especially in terms of lyrical craftsmanship. Compared to the 1980s, the music released in the 90s puts more of an emphasis on his lyrical content, and with that, the detection of mental health references becomes increasingly prevalent. The first album released in this decade was *Temple of the Dog* in 1991, which served as a tribute to the lead singer of Mother Love Bone, Andrew Wood:

I don’t remember recording the demos, but I remember the ideas and writing the lyrics because they were really different and they involved a real person. That wasn’t something I’d normally do. I’d normally write a character that was part me and part a fictional character. But these lyrics specifically reflected Andy and my feelings about him. (Cornell qtd. in Greene)

The music and lyrics on *Temple of the Dog* are thus very much impacted by the death of Cornell's friend, describing his turbulent yet powerful life, and tapping into the difficulties faced by Andrew and the people left to process the grieving. On the album, a total of eight mental health references were identified, containing more variety than the previously released album, as it contained two mentions alluding to depressive thinking, one mention alluding to suicidal ideation, and five identified mental health metaphors. For example, the opening track of the album contains a clear reference to mental wellbeing and suicidal ideation, as Cornell sings "Please, mother mercy, take me from this place / And the long-winded curses I hear in my head" (00:32 – 00:50).

The second album that was released during this decade was Soundgarden's *Badmotorfinger*, which became available towards the end of 1991. Generally speaking, *Badmotorfinger* marked a shift in sound and lyrics, as Soundgarden started to mature, taking "a quantum leap in focus and consistency" (Huey). Across the album, a total of 10 categorizations were made, with six mental health metaphors, one lyric alluding to suicidal ideation, and three lines strongly showcasing depressive thinking. Within the songs and their context, the topics vary widely, containing a song such as "Outshined", which, according to Cornell, is about "going from periods of extreme self-confidence to plummeting in the opposite direction" (qtd. in Rock Power), exemplified through lines such as, "I got up feeling so down, I got off bein' sold out / I've kept the movie rollin', but the story's getting old now" (00:18 – 00:34), and "Well, I'm feeling that I'm sober even though I'm drinking / Well I can't get any lower, still I feel I'm sinking" (02:25 – 02:42). While on the other hand, songs such as "Jesus Christ Pose", and "New Damage", which sonically might sound dark and combative, do not contain biographical lyrics alluding to mental health, as these examples deal with the exploitation of the Jesus crucifixion by famous people (Cornell qtd. in *SPIN*), along with an attack, albeit subtly, to the right-wing government of the United States (Cornell qtd. in *Kerrang!*), respectively. Nonetheless, the

album showcases more of Cornell's personality, giving use a glimpse into the albums to come: "I suppose there are moments on this LP where I'm being more biographical, I've never really been biographical in my lyrics, so when I wrote a line like 'I'm looking California and feeling Minnesota', it just felt refreshing" (qtd. in Rock Power).

The third album released in the 1990s was *Superunknown*, which showcased the commercial appeal of Soundgarden, as it debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 charts, selling over 3.9 million copies in the US to date (Goodman). On *Superunknown*, the biographical lyrical elements introduced to on *Badmotorfinger* become even more prevalent, as it offers a harrowing depiction of alienation and despair (Considine). Accordingly, the identified mental health mentions have increased, with a total of 13 mentions, of which seven serve as mental health metaphors, along with two identified mentions alluding to anxiety and anxious thinking, another two alluding to depressive thinking, and two lyrics referring to suicidal ideation or self-harm. Furthermore, it marks the first album that contained mentions alluding to all the four previously selected categories. The lyrics range from verses playing with the concept of death on "Let Me Drown", as Cornell sings "So, heal my wound without a trace / And seal my tomb without my face / I'm going to the lonely place" (02:53 – 03:05), to recollections of emotions associated with, and alluding to, anxiety throughout "Black Hole Sun", as for example, "Hang my head, drown my fear / Till you all just disappear" (03:27 – 03:36) is being sung in the third verse, thus implying a form of (social) anxiety, as the individual showcases fear, anxiousness, and avoidance of interactions and situations (American Psychiatric Association 832).

In line with the previously released albums, *Down on the Upside*, which marked the fifth studio album by Soundgarden, and was released in 1996, saw an increase in identifiable mental health mentions compared to the forerunners. Throughout the album a total of 16 mentions were categorized, with seven mental health metaphors, seven lyrics containing

mentions of self-harm or suicidal ideation, and two lyrics containing depressive thinking. However, the album did contain lyrics that could have possibly been indicative of a mental health reference, yet were too cryptic and liable to multiple interpretations, and therefore were not taken into account. An example of this is the song “Overfloater”, on which the lines, “I’m on the wire, over and higher / Over the pretense, over the spire / On and connected / I’m overflowing now / I’m overflowing, I’m overflowing now / Alone, alone, alone, alone” (02:06 – 02:39), are repeated throughout the chorus. With the song being regarded to revolve around substance abuse, the lines could potentially be related to mental health, as mental health and substance use disorders share underlying causes and co-occur in one in four adults living with serious mental health problems (SAMHSA), yet it does not necessarily have to allude to mental health, as it can just as easily be about the experience of using substances. On the other hand, other songs throughout the album contained lyrics that were more easily identifiable, such as the opening of the third verse on “Tighter & Tighter”, as Cornell sings, “Swinging from a window’s ledge / Tight and deep / One last sin before I’m dead, before I’m dead” (01:57 – 02:10). Here, although not directly mentioned, the lines are indicative of suicidal ideation, as Cornell describes performing one last sin before he dies, while swinging from the ledge of a window. In this regard, according to a study conducted by Gijzen et al., loneliness, sadness, pessimism, self-hatred and self-blame serve as important constructs for suicide ideation (77), and are present, whether descriptive or oblique, throughout the album.

The final album of the decade is Chris Cornell’s first solo studio album, with *Euphoria Morning*, which was later reissued as *Euphoria Mourning*, being released in 1999. With 21 identified mental health references, of which 12 metaphors, seven lyrics containing depressive thinking, one lyric pertaining to anxiety, and one lyric alluding to suicidal ideation, *Euphoria Morning* incorporates the most mentions of all albums analyzed in the 1990s. However, that does not necessarily equate to an incredibly dark album rooted in agony and malady, as there

are sparks of positivity throughout the album. Take the song “Moonchild” for example, on which Cornell sings “We're dreaming and we're real / We're broken and we're healed” (01:15 – 01:21), which, in a way, summarizes the song, as it provides a message of hope and healing, despite the perceived pain. Nonetheless, Cornell’s cryptic, dark and moody lyrics are still present throughout the album, ranging from clear remarks about a desire to die on “Wave Goodbye”, as Cornell sings “You tell yourself that everything will be alright / You try to stand up strong and brave / But all you want to do is lay down and die” (02:06 – 02:28), to a rumination exemplary of depressive thinking on “When I’m Down”, as Cornell reiterates “And I only love you when I'm down / And I'm only near you when I'm gone / But one thing for you to keep in mind, you know / That I'm down all the time, all the time” (01:33 – 02:15).

2000s and 2010s

In the 2000s Cornell parted with Soundgarden and joined several members of Rage Against the Machine. Together, as the band Audioslave, they released *Audioslave* in 2002, *Out of Exile* in 2005, and *Revelations* in 2006. The increasingly perceived openness on the topic of mental health established in the 1990s compared to the 1980s, continues throughout Audioslave’s musical output. Although the identified mental health classifications are not as common as they were on *Euphoria Morning*, they are still consistently present, unlike in Cornell’s earliest works. The first of the three albums, *Audioslave*, had a total of 15 mentions, of which, with 12 mentions, the majority pertains to metaphors, as one lyric alludes to depressive thinking, and another two allude to suicidal ideation. From lyrics indicative of a mental conflict on “Show Me How to Live”, as “Someone get me a priest / To put my mind to bed, this ringing in my head / Is this a cure or is this a disease?” (01:10 – 01:24) is being sung, to “Gasoline”, on which Cornell alludes to feelings of loneliness and boredom through clever wordplay: “New day yawning / Another day of solitaire” (01:38 – 01:45). However, with *Out*

of *Exile*, Cornell's music started to take on a more positive tone, both sonically and lyrically. Whereas during the making of *Euphoria Morning* and *Audioslave* Cornell was dealing with alcohol abuse issues, a bad marriage and questionable friendships, during *Out of Exile* he found himself in such a different place, as he went to rehab, remarried and had a child on the way (Cornell qtd. in Wiederhorn). With that, *Out of Exile* had the lowest number of mentions since 1989s *Louder Than Love*, with seven identifiable mental health classifications, of which five serve as metaphors, and the remaining two containing references that allude to self-harm or suicidal ideation. Furthermore, within these lyrics, Cornell does not always speak on mental health from his personal perspective, as is exemplified on "Your Time Has Come", where he sings lines such as, "One got a little too depressed and he went and jumped the gun" (01:17 – 01:24), and "I've been wandering sideways / I've stared straight into the sun / Still, I don't know why you're dying / Long before your time has come" (01:39 – 01:52). Nonetheless, the identified mentions once again increased with the release of *Revelations* in 2006, nearly doubling the amount registered on *Out of Exile*, with 13 mentions across the album. Within those mentions there is enormous variety, as all categories were present. Containing five mental health metaphors, six lyrics embodying of depressive thinking, and one mention for both the category of suicidal ideation and anxious thinking. The opening track "Revelations", which is named after the album, directly showcases clear examples of depressive thinking, as the lyrics describe feelings of negativity, sadness, low self-esteem, and emptiness: "I am such a wreck, I am such a mess / I know what I know, why don't you fill in the rest? / I will bring it down, I will make it bad" (00:43 – 00:55), and "Why don't you guide me in if I'm such a lost soul? / I'll spin it 'round, I will make you ill / Since I'm so broken down, why don't you fix me?" (01:45 – 01:57).

After the three albums released with Audioslave, Cornell returned to shift his focus on his solo work, as he released *Carry On* in 2007, which carried the most mentions since 1999s

Euphoria Morning, with 18 in total. Out of those 18 mentions, 11 referred to mental health metaphors, while four lyrics alluded to suicidal ideation, two lyrics pertained anxious thinking, and one lyric pertained to depressive thinking. Once again, the mentions shift between cryptic metaphors, and lyrics dealing with heavy topical matters in a straightforward manner, as the song “No Such Thing” demonstrates, with Cornell singing “But my finger is on the trigger / and I'll turn off the world” (03:34 - 03:42), thus alluding to the idea of ending his own life. Within that same song Cornell also offers a vivid insight into his mind, as he explains his inner conflict: “I had the brains not to think at all / But the rain got in and I thought too hard / On the world, and as usual / I slumped too far into the void / I tried to make everything meaningless / But the rain got in and made it a mess” (01:20 – 01:58). With lyrics such as these, Cornell can be seen as exemplary of a celebrity narrative where personal identity is used in the portrayal of mental health and psychiatric illnesses, which can serve as a powerful method of communication to increase awareness (Calhoun and Gold 240).

During the final decade of Chris Cornell’s life, two studio albums were released, with *King Animal*, which was released as Soundgarden, in 2012, and *Higher Truth*, which served as a solo album, in 2015. The first of the two albums saw Cornell reuniting with his former band members after a nearly 16 year-long hiatuses, and although the album brings back the hard and aggressive sound fans have grown accustomed to over the years, the actual lyrical content is not as dark as its predecessors. On *King Animal*, a total of six mentions were identified, of which five metaphors, and one lyric that is indicative of suicidal ideation. In line with the previously analyzed albums, *King Animal* contains a mixture of cryptic and blunt lyrics, with Cornell describing the writing process as “one part reminiscent and comfortable, like putting on old clothes, and one part exciting because I had the opportunity to progress with those writing relationships and with this band” (qtd. in Laing). However, in terms of lyrical content, the album can perhaps best be described through the work of Josh Graham, who designed the

artwork for *King Animal* based on the interpretations of the songs, expressing his intention to showcase the juxtaposition of life and death and how "everything between there is such a massive part of the human condition" (qtd. in Bobbitt). Throughout the album Cornell continues to showcase his lyrical variety, as can be heard on "Halfway There", where he sings, "I woke up with my feet nailed down / And my head moving to the speed of sound / Had a dream I was caught in a maze / And I couldn't find my way back out" (00:04 – 00:20), which is then followed by contradicting messages of hope and fulfillment.

Even though *King Animal*, to a certain extent, contained less vivid and frequent descriptions of an inner conflict, the follow-up album, *Higher Truth*, marked a massive leap back towards the harrowing and dark lyrics often found throughout Cornell's discography. With a total of 23 identifiable mentions, *Higher Truth* has the highest account of mental health references across the 13 analyzed albums. Even though, sonically speaking, the album is relatively calm, showcasing more of a singer-songwriter approach to the audio, it nonetheless features some of the most moody, devastating, and beautiful lyrics heard. All in all, the mentions showcase the variety on the album, as 12 mental health metaphors were detected, along with five lyrics indicating depressive thinking, four lyrics alluding to suicidal ideation, and two lyrics showcasing anxious thinking. Especially prevalent on *Higher Truth* is the connection between mood and seasonality, as Cornell describes his interpretation of the relation between the two on multiple occasions. An example of this can be heard on "Through the Window", on which Cornell sings "Clouds have gathered turned to rain / Candle on your sill burned out / Weather on your face / Timed to match the mood outside" (00:14 – 00:34). Another clear example can be heard on "Josephine", as he sings the line "Leave this endless winter behind" (02:51 – 02:55). Although the connection between mental health and seasonality is not a new one, as Cornell has alluded to it throughout his career, frequently mentioning lyrics that refer to the rain, the clouds, the sun, the moon, and the cold, nonetheless, *Higher Truth* manages

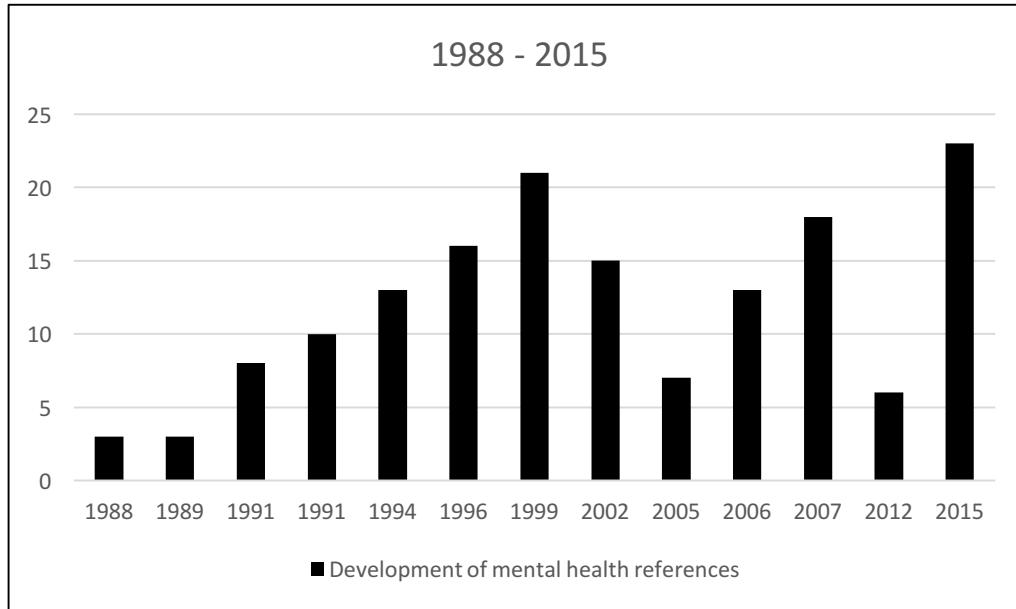
to convey it with an increased graceful clarity. With that, a study conducted in Finland in 2022, which was representative of the general population aged 18 years and older, found robust associations of seasonal variations in mood and behavior with suicidality and the feelings of worthlessness (Palmu et al. 185). Furthermore, “There has been a regular temporal relationship between the onset of manic, hypomanic, or major depressive episodes and a particular time of the year (e.g., in the fall or winter)” (American Psychiatric Association 688). Similarly, the associations made by Cornell throughout his discography suggest an enduring sensitivity to the vicissitudes of seasons and mood changes.

Conclusion

Specifically pertaining to the subject at hand, the lyrics generally included a thorough number of references to mental wellbeing, which gradually increased as his career progressed. During the two albums released in the 1980s, an average of three mental health references were detected, while in the 1990s, across the five analyzed albums, an average of 13.6 mentions were recognized. The decade that followed, the 2010s, had an average of 13.25 mentions across the four analyzed albums, while the 2010s had showcased an average of 14.5 indications across two albums. In this regard, it is safe to state that, with time, Cornell’s lyrics increasingly showcased references to mental wellbeing, especially compared to his earliest works. Furthermore, although there is not a clear-cut way of knowing if the two are directly related, the gathered data does show that, in the case of Cornell, the inclusion of mental health in lyrics correlate, to a certain extent, with the overall openness surrounding mental health issues, as it has become more prevalent with time. The graph on the following page (see graph 1) showcases the linear progression of mental health references throughout Cornell’s discography.

Graph 1

A linear overview of the mental health references on the studio albums released between 1988 and 2015⁴



By analyzing the lyrics through the perspective of the human emotional range, along with the identification of the references through the exploration of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Cornell does not offer, although mostly done through metaphorical wordplay, a sugarcoated portrayal of mental health, as his lyrics are a ferocious representation of his inner turbulence, thus offering an authentic, yet identifiable, accessible, and to many relatable, portrayal. However, analyzing Cornell's lyrics can feel incredibly eerie, as, at times, he prophesied his ending through his music, providing a raw illustration of the

⁴ This graph provides an overview of the development of the analyzed albums and the frequency of mental health references in the lyrics. It starts with the debut studio album of Soundgarden (1988) and ends with Cornell's final studio album containing original songs (2015). The year 1991 is placed twice in the table, this is due to the fact that both *Temple of the Dog* (first half of the year) and *Badmotorfinger* (second half of the year) were released in 1991.

ways in which art can mimic and imitate life. Perhaps one of the more emotional and evocative examples of this can be given through the final music video that Cornell created for the song “Nearly Forgotten My Broken Heart”, as it was removed a mere three weeks after Cornell’s passing, due to the video depicting the late singer as a death row prisoner preparing to be hanged (Cush), thus offering a parallel to the way in which he ended his own life. Nonetheless, knowing that mental health is oftentimes still scoffed at with a flippant disregard, especially among today’s older generations, as mental illnesses are commonly viewed as a sign of weakness (Lima and Ivbijaro 125), it was remarkably courageous of Cornell to showcase his vulnerability and inner conflict through his decades-spanning musical output, thus offering a brutally honest view of personal experiences, in which societal taboos did not confine him to lyrical boundaries. Although the exact impact of Cornell and his openness in his lyrics cannot be determined, it goes without saying that it more than likely touched the hearts and minds of millions of people from all walks of life, with a permanent continuation of his musical legacy, as the generations to come will one day explore the hauntingly beautiful lyrics crafted by a pioneer of the grunge-movement, whose art was never restricted to the borders of the sound that he came up in.

Although this analysis has provided a thorough look at Cornell and his lyrical craftsmanship, it needs to be taken into account that it focused specifically on the identification of mental health references within the lyrics. Therefore, it would not do Cornell and his oeuvre justice to simply categorize him as a songwriter who only wrote about an inner struggle, fueled by darkness and desperation, as songs about the beauty of life and love, the inequalities of society, and the significance of hope and purpose, are present all throughout his discography. Take songs like “The Keeper”, “Non-State Actor”, or “Wide Awake”, all of which deal with political themes and highlight Cornell’s frustration with the injustices of the world. Or songs such as “Finally Forever”, “Our Time in the Universe”, and “Only These Words”, which highlight his lyrical exploration of themes such as love and hope.

Chapter 2

A Lyrical Exploration of Fiona Apple's Music

Fiona Apple, born Fiona Apple McAfee-Maggart, on September 13, 1977, in New York City, is an American singer-songwriter, and classically trained pianist. By the age of 8, Apple was already playing her own compositions at recitals, and her thirst for extended musical knowledge quickly drove her beyond classical training (Encyclopedia of World Biography), as she promptly ventured into the multifarious musical landscape. Throughout her professional music career Apple has released five studio albums, spanning several decades: *Tidal* in 1996, *When the Pawn...* in 1999, *Extraordinary Machine* in 2005, *The Idler Wheel...* in 2012, and most recently, *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* in 2020. The release of her first full-length musical output in 1996 was lauded by music fans and critics alike, garnering her multiple Grammy nominations, among which the categories “Best New Artist”, and “Best Rock Song”, and winning the category for “Best Female Rock Performance” (Recording Academy, “40th Annual Grammy Awards”). Apple’s debut album instantaneously solidified her relevance as an artist within the ever-changing musical landscape, exemplifying the metamorphosis of a scattered and fragmented, yet diverse and refined terrain of the 90s-music scene, as her debut embodied the sonic dimension of a confluence of predecessors, while the lyrics reveal the optimism and despair of her time. “On *Tidal*, I can hear Apple forging the tools of her own liberation in the generative fires of youth” (Zoladz), and although she was only 18 years old when the album released, it demonstrates a musical and lyrical maturity that is invigorated in its exemplification of the saying “wise beyond their years”. Nevertheless, *Tidal* only marked the beginning of a longstanding and successful musical journey. *When the Pawn...*, Apple’s second studio album, was released three years after her debut, and where *Tidal* functioned as a lifeline for Apple, showcasing “many adolescent obsessions and frustrations with a youthful abandonment”, *When*

the Pawn... “exhibits a more mature perspective focusing on the complexities of establishing and maintaining relationships” (Harrington). Moreover, the album title in itself brings with it a peculiar uniqueness, as the original title is 90 words long, entering the Guinness Book of Records for the, at the time of release, world’s longest album title: *When the Pawn Hits the Conflicts He Thinks Like a King What He Knows Throws the Blows When He Goes to the Fight and He'll Win the Whole Thing 'Fore He Enters the Ring There's No Body to Batter When Your Mind Is Your Might So When You Go Solo, You Hold Your Own Hand and Remember That Depth Is the Greatest of Heights and If You Know Where You Stand Then You Know Where to Land and If You Fall It Won't Matter Cuz You'll Know That You're Right*. However, according to Apple, the album name serves as response to a *SPIN* cover story of 1997, in which they edited together the article to make her come across as a “self-obsessed drama queen exploiting her psychic wounds” (qtd. in Harrington). Through the album title, Apple demonstrates the liberating nature that writing holds for her.

Apple’s third album, *Extraordinary Machine*, released a mere 6 years after *When the Pawn*..., and although the album was originally slated to drop in 2003, it partially ended up leaking online, thus eventually ending up being reworked and released in 2005:

Fans erroneously thought that Apple's record label, Epic, had rejected the first version of *Extraordinary Machine* and protested outside Epic's headquarters in early 2005; in reality, according to Elizondo, Apple was unhappy with the results, and it was her decision to redo the record, not her label's. (qtd. in *SPIN*)

Extraordinary Machine once again marked critical success, as it was named the “Album of the year” by several publications, including *The New York Times* and *Entertainment Weekly* (Genius, “Extraordinary Machine by Fiona Apple”). Ultimately, *Extraordinary Machine* offers a transitional moment in Apple’s discography, navigating the thin line “between an extended adolescence and the delayed arrival of adulthood, the establishment of caricature and her

liberation from it, and the florid singer-songwriter material that made her a star and the more angular, percussive music to come” (Wood). Furthermore, the music and pop culture related publication *Rolling Stone* included it as number 49 in their list of “100 Best Albums of the Decade”, and more recently in 2020, the publication placed it at 444 on their revisited list of “the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time” (Rolling Stone). In doing so, *Extraordinary Machine* not only highlights the continuing relevance of Apple’s musical and lyrical artistry, as it simultaneously showcases her ability to mix familiar elements with new details, thus offering an output that, with a seeming ease, is able to navigate a continual place of relevance in the musical landscape.

Nearly seven year later, Apple’s fourth album, 2012’s *The Idler Wheel...*, is released. Although not nearly as long as the 90-word title for her second studio album, her fourth output once again offers an enigmatic and poetic title, as the full album name reads as followed: *The Idler Wheel Is Wiser Than the Driver of the Screw and Whipping Cords Will Serve You More Than Ropes Will Ever Do. The Idler Wheel...* marked Apple’s most successful album release, as it peaked at number three on the *Billboard 200* charts (Caulfield). In a sense, when listening to the album, it is evident that traits and elements present throughout her discography are exemplified and fully come to fruition on her fourth full-length album. The lyrics are varied yet topical, as they deal with subjects from self-acceptance and self-hate to romance, confidence, loss, and more. Whereas musically, *The Idler Wheel...* showcases piano-driven arrangements, with Apple’s use of voice and intonation emphasizing the raw emotions integrated in the lyrics, as she sings through the integration of contralto and belting: “On her entirely acoustic fourth album, *The Idler Wheel...*, the 34-year-old makes herself heard with her voice, her words, her piano, and not much else (Dombal qtd. in Pitchfork).

Apple’s latest album, *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*, was released on April 17, 2020, and marked her return to the musical spotlight after nearly eight years. The title of the album

provides a slight hint into the themes dealt with on the album, as *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* serves as a reference to a scene in the television show “The Fall”, which sees Gillian Anderson take on the role of a sex-crime investigator, who at one point calls out the phrase after finding a locked door to a room where a girl has been tortured (Nussbaum). Lyrically the album once again offers a personal approach, as many of the lines include recollections of Apple’s personal experiences, dealing with female solidarity, confinement, anger, heartache, human fragility, and much more. Through the album’s raw and percussive sound, featuring all sorts of drums, bells and chants, combined with her honest, even comic, and oftentimes straightforward lyrics, she captures the perversity and sensitivity of her mind. In a way, one could argue that *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* captures the essence of Apple’s music, as it offers topical material dealing with a wide range of emotions typical of Apple’s discography. Whether she expresses her rage on sexual violence with a striking, confronting, and personal anger, or whether she describes a vivid picture of the feeling and experience of being ostracized, *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* presents an unmistakable growth and lyrical honesty. To no surprise, the album was met with critical acclaim, earning the Grammy award for “Best Alternative Music Album”, along with winning “Best Rock Performance” for the song “Shameika” (Hussey).

Aside from releasing five studio albums, all of which are generally regarded to be qualitative musical outputs, Apple has worked with a plethora of artists, ranging from musicians to authors and movie directors. She has collaborated frequently with director Paul Thomas Anderson, worked with the likes of Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan, appearing on Dylan’s “Murder Most Foul”, which is featured on 2020’s *Rough and Rowdy Ways*. In an interview with *Pitchfork*, Apple recounted playing the piano on Dylan’s album: “I told Bob I was really insecure about it, and he was really encouraging and nice. He was just like, ‘You’re not here to be perfect, you’re here to be you’” (qtd. in Pelly). Furthermore, Apple has contributed original songs to movies such as *This is 40*, *Pleasantville*, *Echo in The Canyon*, *The Affair*, and her

music has been featured in everything from *Family Guy* to *Euphoria* and *Mr. Robot* to *Bridesmaids* (WhatSong). Throughout her expansive, yet quantitatively limited career, Apple has grown to become one of the few modern artists that has earned comparisons to the generally regarded pinnacle of the musical realm, as she has oftentimes been referred to as a singer-songwriter on the level of musicians such as Joni Mitchell, Patti Smith, and Bob Dylan; “The music of other nineties icons grew dated, or panicky in its bid for relevance, whereas Apple’s albums felt unique and lasting” (Nussbaum).

Apple’s music in itself is incredibly diverse, as her wide-ranging musical background blends elements from all musical divisions imaginable, as it embodies fluctuating elements of jazz, pop, blues, rock, percussion, and more. Although the incorporation of broad musical diversity gives Apple’s discography a distinctive sound, the oftentimes brutally honest and emotionally charged lyrics are an imperative and prevalent part of her work. Throughout her career Apple has been vocal about her struggles with mental health, stating that she suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, anxiety, and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (Nussbaum). Since she started her career at a relatively young age, she has often been perceived as, in her own words, “the patron saint of mental illness, instead of someone who creates things” (Apple qtd. in Nussbaum). Although, especially at the beginnings of her career, the media has often tried to put her in a box, filled with endless comparisons and unchallenging and languorous definitions and limitations, Apple’s music is perhaps undefinable in terms of overarching characterizations, as it unequivocally serves as a confluence of life and art. Subsequently, her personal experiences, whether good or bad, are assimilated into her lyrics. The songs, which oftentimes can be strikingly raw and confronting, venture into a variety of topics, however, the prevalence of the inclusion of Apple’s mental and emotional state is a reoccurring phenomenon throughout her work. With that, Apple’s inner turmoil started at a young age, as she recounts one day in fifth grade telling a friend that she was going to kill

herself and bring her sister with her, causing her to be sent for psychiatric evaluation, where her signs of depression and problems with overthinking were observed (qtd. in Heath). At that point, Apple's father noticed, when she was around the age of 10, a seemingly darker tone seeping to the fore: "She had trouble sleeping at night and she had written these inaccessible lyrics about darkness. It kind of scared me in the beginning" (Maggart qtd. in Heath). However, a mere few years later, at the age of 12, tragedy struck worse, as on the day before Thanksgiving Apple was raped in the corridor outside her mother's apartment (Heath). Apple refers to her traumatic experiences throughout her music, as for example on "Sullen Girl" she alludes to it through her lyrics: "They don't know I used to sail the deep and tranquil sea / But he washed me shore and he took my pearl / And left an empty shell of me" (01:32 – 02:00). Topics of abuse and mental health issues can be heavy to deal with, not only because they greatly traumatize and impact an individual on a level that is essentially beyond comprehension, but also because speaking out against it is not always a readily available option, and even when it is, victims are still often met with judgement, leaving them feeling ashamed and less-than a person (National Domestic Violence Hotline). Especially when dealing with a public figure, one could argue that the passed judgement is intensified due to their cultural relevance, public recognition and newsworthiness. Nonetheless, as explained in the introduction of this thesis, studies indicate that the continued disclosure of mental health by public figures can have a positive impact, as celebrities with personal experience about the condition of which they speak are more likely to be perceived as authentic, credible and impactful messengers (Lee et al. qtd. in Gronholm and Thornicroft 3). Therefore, it is important that these heavy topics do make it into song lyrics, potentially helping others along the way, while simultaneously reducing the faced stigmatizations. In similar fashion, Apple recounted being asked about her experience with rape, as reporters would vaguely, agonizingly, and circuitously bring up the subject, to which she responded direct and swiftly: "Please don't act like I have got food in my teeth. It's

out in the open. It's not something that I'm embarrassed about, so don't act like it's something that I should be embarrassed about" (qtd. in Heath). Ultimately, Apple's hardships and traumas are there for the world to consume, and although that may sound dark and bleak, it brings hope, support, and comfort to others. From end to end and start to finish, one thing we can be sure of is that Apple will always be her unapologetic self, who will say something whenever she has something to say (Apple qtd. in Heath).

Selection of Discography

Throughout the previous paragraphs I have provided an expeditious rundown of Apple's musical career, briefly discussing the five released studio albums. In similar fashion to the previous chapter, it is important to take a look at which albums and songs will be analyzed. Whereas Cornell had a rather venturesome career, being the main vocalist and songwriter for several music groups, alongside releasing several solo albums, Apple has mainly been considered a solo musician. However, that is not to say she has not collaborated with other artists, as the previous paragraphs already briefly mentioned her work with Johnny Cash, whom she collaborated with on a special version of "Bridged Over Troubled Water" and "Father and Son" (Ellis). Additionally, Apple has covered songs by the likes of John Lennon and Percy Mayfield, and, over the years, worked with everyone from Elvis Costello to Phoebe Bridgers, and Zach Galifianakis to Jeff Goldblum (Kaye). Furthermore, aside from Apple's five studio albums, she has also released an *iTunes Originals*, which signifies a series of digital releases only available through the iTunes Store, in the form of a compilation album consisting of 26 tracks featuring live performances, previously released songs, and interviews (Apple Music). Nonetheless, in line with the previous chapter, I will only be including the officially released studio albums in the analysis, while adhering to the track listing of the initial releases, thus once again deriving the album, song names, songwriting credits and lyrics from the versions

available on Apple Music, with additional information derived from Genius. Due to Apple's predominant focus on solo material, factors such as covers of songs and lyrics featuring various songwriting credits do not play as much of a decisive role as in the previous chapter, simply because they are not as prevalent. In this regard, whether we are referring to *Tidal*, *When the Pawn...*, *Extraordinary Machine*, *The Idler Wheel...*, or *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*, which all together contain a total of 56 songs, the vast majority, with the exception of "Ladies" on *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*, which was co-written with Sebastian Steinberg and David Garza (Genius, "Who Wrote 'Ladies' by Fiona Apple?"), are all solely written by Fiona Apple. Although the previously mentioned "Ladies" has multiple songwriting credits, Apple is nonetheless responsible for the majority of the song lyrics, as becomes evident through a rundown of the song in an interview with *Vulture*, explaining that contributions were mainly done for the background parts, along with describing *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* and "Ladies" to be about "not letting men pit us against each other or keep us separate from each other so they can control the message" (Apple qtd. in Handler). Consequently, creating the selection of the discography is not as complicated as it was in the analysis of Cornell. Due to the decision to only analyze the officially released studio albums, and knowing that Apple was the predominant songwriter of the lyrics on all the songs, the selection of the discography therefore coincides with the 56 songs released among the five albums released over a 24-year period. An overview of the albums included in the analysis, along with the number of songs they contain, and the year in which they were released, can be found on the next page (see table 4). However, unlike the first chapter, the corresponding table does not include a list with omitted tracks, simply because every song featured on the five albums will be included in the analysis.

Table 4

Albums, year of release, and number of tracks

Album:	Year:	Number of songs:
<i>Tidal</i>	1996	10
<i>When the Pawn...</i>	1999	10
<i>Extraordinary Machine</i>	2005	12
<i>The Idler Wheel...</i>	2012	11
<i>Fetch the Bolt Cutters</i>	2020	13

Analysis

Across the five analyzed albums, containing 56 songs, a total of 44 mental health references were identified. Below (see table 5), an overview can be found of all the categorizations made across Apple's discography. Moreover, the following paragraphs will provide a rundown of each album, highlighting noteworthy lyrics, and where needed, an additional explanation of the identified categorizations.

Table 5

Mental health references across the five analyzed albums

Album:	Category 1: Anxious thinking	Category 2: Depressive thinking	Category 3: Suicidal ideation	Category 4: Metaphor	Total:
<i>Tidal</i>		1	1	5	7
<i>When the Pawn...</i>		1		6	7
<i>Extraordinary Machine</i>	1	2	1	6	10
<i>The Idler Wheel...</i>	1		2	9	12
<i>Fetch the Bolt Cutters</i>	1	1	1	5	8
Total:	3	5	5	31	44
Average:	0.6	1	1	7.4	8.8

1990s and 2000s

Apple's debut album, 1996's *Tidal*, contains a total of seven mental health references across 10 songs. Of those references the majority, five in total, pertain to the category of mental health metaphors, whereas the two remaining references are divided among the category of suicidal ideation and depressive thinking. As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, Apple was only 18-years-old when the album dropped, however, many of the songs were already written at an earlier age, as she wrote the majority of the songs at 16. Andrew Slater, who at the time was an executive for Sony Music, recalls meeting Fiona Apple for the first time when she was 17: "I was not entirely convinced that this person sitting in front of me – who was clearly 17 – had written those words" (qtd. in *The New York Times*). Nevertheless, Apple did write those words, and her album exemplifies this within a range of themes, from romance to trauma, and everything in between. "Sullen Girl", the second song on the album, which was already briefly discussed earlier on in this chapter, contains three references to mental health, ultimately touching upon her trauma, feelings of sadness, and struggles with eating. During the making of the album Apple was dealing with an eating disorder (Genius, "Fiona Apple – Sullen Girl"), which she alludes to through the following lines: "Days like this, I don't know what to do with myself / All day and all night / I wander the halls along the walls / And under my breath I say to myself / 'I need fuel to take flight'" (00:22 – 00:42). With that, eating disorders are characterized by a persistence of eating or eating-related behavior that results in the altered consumption or absorption of food (American Psychiatric Association 1391), and significant weight loss or gain, along with a decrease or increase in appetite, are among the most common symptoms that are attributed to depressive disorder (717), something which Apple has openly dealt with in the past. However, besides the reference to her eating disorder and her traumatic experience referred to earlier on in the chapter, "Sullen Girl" also includes a descriptive metaphor of her mental state, as she sings "And there's too much going on / But it's calm under

the waves / In the blue of my oblivion / Under the waves / In the blue of my oblivion” (00:45 – 01:12). Here, the color blue carries a certain ambiguity, as it can refer to the water of the waves and the metaphorical inclination of the color to indicate a feeling of sadness. In this regard, the metaphorical use of the color blue as an indication for sadness is used further on in the album as well, as the opening lines of “The First Taste” start off by saying “I lie in an early bed thinking late thoughts / Waiting for the black to replace my blue” (00:00 – 00:18). Moreover, much like Cornell in the first chapter, Apple alludes to the correlation between seasonality and mood changes, using the opening verse of “Pale September” to describe how the month suited her mood, but as the weather became frigid she became lonelier and isolated: “Pale September, I wore the time like a dress that year / The autumn days swung soft around me like cotton on my skin / But as the embers of the summer lost their breath and disappeared / My heart went cold and only hollow rhythms resounded from within” (00:19 – 00:52).

The second studio album released in the 1990s, *When the Pawn...*, contains the exact same number of mental health references as *Tidal*, as the album, across 10 tracks, has seven identifiable mentions, of which six serve as a metaphor, while the remaining one describes depressive thinking. The songs featured on *When the Pawn...* are very topical, as the majority of the songs revolve around love and relationships, describing nearly every aspect imaginable within this context. Consequently, general references to mental health are loosely scattered throughout the songs on the album. The first one, featured on “On the Bound”, immediately is reminiscent of several of the mental health metaphors that Apple implemented on *Tidal*, as here she sings: “It's true, I do imbue my blue unto myself, I make it bitter” (01:38 – 01:42). Although this line very clearly serves as an indication of her mental wellbeing, it should nonetheless be taken into account that the mention of the color blue does not always serve as an indication of feeling depressed or sad. Generally speaking, within the English language, color-emotion associations are ubiquitous, however, the line mentioned above in the lyrics is not concerned

with color perception, as is it used to offer a metaphorical description of her feelings, thus focusing on the affective expression of color (Jonaskaite et al. 1). Besides this particular line, Apple integrates the theme of mental health in a number of other songs, however, most prevalently on “Paper Bag” and “Fast as You Can”, with both songs containing numerous references. On “Fast as You Can” certain lines indicate a clear-cut description not uncommon with depression, as she sings: “Sometimes my mind don't shake and shift / But most of the time, it does / And I get to the place where I'm begging for a lift / Or I'll drown in the wonders and the was” (01:24 – 01:53). Whereas on “Paper Bag” some of the lines are slightly more nuanced, offering subtle hints about her mental state and issues with eating: “Cause I know I'm a mess he don't wanna clean up / I got to fold cause these hands are too shaky to hold / Hunger hurts, but starving works / When it costs too much to love” (00:55 – 01:14). Here, within these lines, the shakiness of her hands, combined with hunger and starving, offer a reference to Apple’s alleged eating disorder. Although it is rather clearly mentioned in the lyrics, the reference here takes a slightly different tone than it did on *Tidal*, as she seems to allude to her inability to eat as a form of escapism, which is generally defined as the attempt to avoid awareness of aversive beliefs (Longeway 1), with research indicating that, among people dealing with eating disorders and related mental health issues, restricting food intake is often seen as a way of controlling strong negative emotions and perseverative negative thinking (Vann et al. 8), thus serving as a way to maintain the feeling of control, while numbing the mind.

Apple’s third album, the first and only one to be released in the 2000s, builds on the themes dealt with on the previous albums, while simultaneously showcasing Apple’s artistic and lyrical growth. *Extraordinary Machine* contains a total of 10 mentions across a dozen songs featured on the album. Not only does *Extraordinary Machine* mark the highest number of mental health references within the first three albums of Apple’s discography, it also contains the most diverse range of mentions identified thus far. However, with that being said, the

majority of the references still pertain to the category of mental health metaphors, with a total of six classifications. Two classifications for the category for depression and depressive thinking were made, while the remaining two references are equally divided across the categories of anxiety and anxious thinking and the category of suicidal ideation and self-harm. Many of the lyrics on *Extraordinary Machine* seem to be well-thought-out, containing clever wordplay, infused with storytelling, emotion and imagery. Within these lyrics and songs, the fifth track of the album, titled “Tymps (The Sick in the Head Song)”, contains the most obvious reference to mental health executed by Apple, as the name of the song already seemingly indicates towards the theme at hand. Nonetheless, the song is actually about trying to get over a former lover, and, unlike the title might suggest, only contains one mental health reference in the form of a metaphor, as Apple wonders aloud whether she perceives herself as mentally unstable, or if the experienced feelings, emotions and state of mind are simply a response to the faded love she held for the other: “I’m either so sick in the head, I need to be bled dry to quit / Or I just really used to love him, I sure hope that’s it” (00:44 – 00:55). Moreover, this particular song offers an interesting juxtaposition in reference to the confluence of lyrics and sound, as sonically the song is upbeat, carrying a near cheerful melody, while the lyrics generally tend to take on a darker tone. Nonetheless, the album contains songs that feature an assemblage of verses that seem to allude to Apple’s state of mind, with “Red, Red, Red” containing many noteworthy lines, especially in relation to the previously analyzed albums and lyrics. In the opening verse of the song Apple once again integrates color psychology into her lyrics: “I don’t understand about complementary colors / And what they say / Side by side they both get bright / Together, they both get gray” (00:16 – 00:30). In this context, it is important to understand that color is a complex construct, and although theoretical and empirical work linking color to psychological functioning have been relatively slow to emerge, studies do indicate that color is about more than aesthetics, ultimately accommodating the ability to carry information, along

with influencing people's affect, cognition and behavior (Elliot and Maier 112). In the provided line, Apple refers to the color gray, which through its absence of color tends to hold negative connotations related to feelings of sadness (Thorstenson qtd. in Basu). However, Apple continues her integration of color associations, as the first chorus on the song goes as followed: "But he's been pretty much yellow / And I've been kind of blue / But all I can see is / Red, red, red, red, red / Now, what am I gonna do?" (00:32 – 00:52). In these lines, through the characteristics of color, three different and opposite emotions are mentioned. These colors all take on a different meaning, and, according to the Emotion Typology, are associated with contradicting emotions, with Apple referring to the other person as yellow, which is associated with positive emotions such as pride, fascination and determination, while she refers to herself as blue and red, indicating a range of emotions from anxiety, worry and fear, to anger, frustration and resentment (Fokkinga and Desmet).

2010s and 2020s

The fourth studio album by Apple, *The Idler Wheel...*, released nearly a decade later, in 2012, and features 11 songs. As mentioned earlier on in the introduction of this chapter, the fourth album deals with everything from self-hate to self-acceptance through the guidance of piano-driven arrangements. Generally speaking, the titles of the songs tend to indicate to certain meaningful words within the verses, and the track titles can either provide a hint into the theme, as for example "Left Alone" does, or they can fuel the remaining mystery, as titles like "Werewolf" and "Daredevil" do not offer a conclusive topical direction. With that, *The Idler Wheel...* contains a total of 12 mental health references, with nine of those indicating a mental health metaphor, two categorizations of suicidal ideation and self-harm, and one mention relating to anxiety and anxious thinking. Right off the bat the album addresses mental health, as "Every Single Night", which serves as the first song, deals with internal conflict and

isolation. The opening verse of the song introduces us to the theme, as Apple sings “Every single night, I endure the flight / Of little wings of white-flamed butterflies in my brain / These ideas of mine percolate the mind / Trickle down the spine, swarm the belly, swellin' to a blaze” (00:08 – 00:22). Apple continues the song by describing how her thoughts and fears have eclipsed her feelings: “That's where the pain comes in like a second skeleton / Tryin' to fit beneath the skin, I can't fit the feelings in, oh” (00:23 – 00:37). However, lyrically the song develops into a more lucid pattern, as Apple implements two slightly different choruses. The first chorus includes the line “Every single night's alight with my brain, hey” (00:38 – 00:48), while the second chorus is similar, yet features a small difference; “Every single night's a fight with my brain, hey” (01:20 – 01:30). With the chorus Apple indicates how even when the night arrives, when people generally experience calmness in darkness, she, along with her mind, is still operating at full force. Whereas the second chorus offers an even more direct metaphor for the turmoil in her head. Nonetheless, the album also offers references to mental health that differentiate from the ones present on the other albums, with particular lines in “Daredevil” and “Valentine” serving as an example of this. In the opening verse of “Daredevil”, “I guess I just must be a daredevil / I don't feel anything until I smash it up / I'm caught on the cold, I'm caught on the hot, not so with the warmer lot” (00:06 – 00:21), the lyrics describe a dire need for extremes, both behavioral and emotional, as particularly the last line gives a strong indication of this. In this regard, both the previously highlighted lines of “Every Single Night”, along with the opening verse in “Daredevil” strongly allude to various emotions and expressions associated with several mental health diagnoses, and therefore, in the context of the theme of the songs as a whole, are interpreted as such. Whether we are referring to the subjective experience that thoughts are racing, an excessive need and involvement in activities that have a high potential for painful consequences, or distinct periods of either elevated or irritable mood, they all

function as diagnostic criteria for several disorders, oftentimes preceded or followed by hypomanic or depressive episodes (American Psychiatric Association 573-575).

The Idler Wheel... also contains several lyrics that are easily identifiable, as they offer a clear and direct interpretation. Take the opening lines of “Valentine” for example, where Apple sings “I stared at you and cut myself / That's all I'll do cause I'm not free / A fugitive too dull to flee” (00:50 – 01:04). This line clearly indicates an outspoken intention to inflict harm upon oneself. However, the song then continues to offer a rhythmic description of sadness fueled by anxiousness: “My teardrops seasoned every plate / I tried to dance but lost my nerve / I cramped up in the learning curve” (01:57 – 02:09). In these lines Apple describes how her sadness and anxiousness prevent her from doing certain things that she wants to do. With that, muscle tension, vigilance, and cautious or avoidant behavior are shared features of anxiety disorders (830). Moreover, anxiety disorders are the most frequently reported disorders among musicians, with performance anxiety, which is classified as a subtype of social anxiety disorder (830), having an estimated prevalence rate of 15-25% (Spahn et al. qtd. in Fernholz et al. 3). Therefore, these lyrics showcase more variety in terms of categorizations, and with that, demonstrate how *The Idler Wheel...* takes a slightly darker, and at times more direct approach than its predecessors. Nonetheless, it still serves as the lyrical presentation of mixed emotions, where rage and romance coincide and unearth in rough and rowdy vocals.

The final album as part of the analysis, 2020's *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*, contained eight mental health references across the 13 songs featured on the album. Within the eight mental health references, five were part of the category pertaining to metaphorical references, while one mention related to the category of anxious thinking, one to the category of depressive thinking, and one to the category of suicidal ideation. Compared to the final album analyzed in the first chapter, and considering that the album is generally regarded as a lyrically personal album dealing with heavy topic manner, eight references might seem a bit low. However, it

should be taken into account that the inclusion of serious themes in lyrics does not necessarily equate to mental health references, as Apple ultimately talks about a multitude of topics, ranging from the description of toxic misogynistic behavior on “Ladies” to the disbelief of sexual violence survivors and the accompanying rage on “For Her”. Nonetheless, mental health is a topic that is prevalent throughout the album, as Apple offers descriptions of changes in moods, vivid depictions of obsessive-compulsive disorder rituals, recollections of depression, and more. Take “Shameika” for example, it serves as the second song on the album, and within the pre-chorus Apple sings the following lines: “In class, I’d pass the time / Drawing a slash for every time / The second hand went by a group of five / Done twelve times was a minute” (00:24 – 00:31). These lines describe a ritual she had to do as a child, as she was already dealing with obsessive-compulsive disorder, which is characterized by the presence of obsessions and/or compulsions. “Obsessions are recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges, or images that are experienced as intrusive and unwanted, whereas compulsions are repetitive behaviors or mental acts that an individual feels driven to perform” (American Psychiatric Association 1016). Furthermore, there are close relations between the anxiety disorders and the obsessive-compulsive and related disorders (1017). Therefore, due to the context of Apple’s self-reflecting lyrics, along with the defined criteria provided by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the description of obsessive and compulsive behavior featured on “Shameika” is counted as a reference connected to the category of anxiety and anxious thinking. However, throughout the album she not only alludes to issues with obsessive and compulsive behavior, as a song like “Heavy Balloon” explicitly deals with the topic of depression. The first verse of the song opens with the following lines: “People like us, we play with a heavy balloon / We keep it up to keep the devil at bay, but it always falls way too soon” (00:12 – 00:22). According to Apple, “People with depression are always playing with this thing that is very heavy” (qtd. in Nussbaum), thus, the imagery of a heavy balloon is used as a metaphor for the

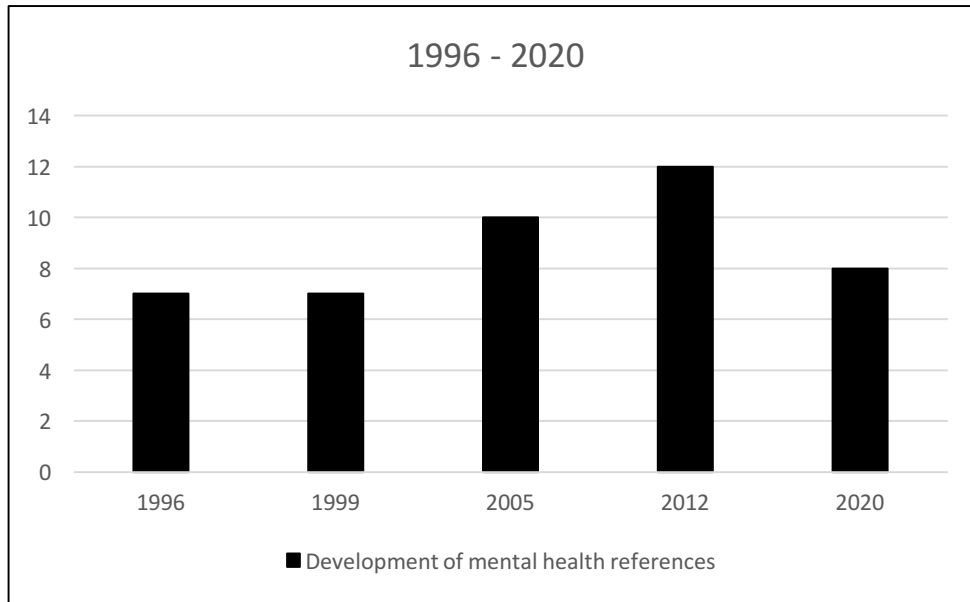
constant weight depression can implore on a person. This metaphorical description is in line with the medical equivalent, as fatigue and a loss of energy, which can diminish the ability to think and concentrate, are among the most common symptoms (719). The song then continues with a longer verse reminiscent of the analysis in the first chapter, as Apple directly describes feelings of depression in a similar fashion as Cornell would, integrating references to the sky, animals and more: “In the middle of the day, it's like the sun / But the Saharan one, it's staring me down / Forcing all forms of life inside of me to retreat underground / It grows relentless like the teeth of a rat / It's just got to keep on gnawing at me / And it constricts like a boa on a hose, nothing flows / So the pressure grows instead of the sea” (01:08 – 01:30).

Conclusion

In similar fashion as the first chapter, the lyrics in Apple’s discography generally included multiple references to mental health issues, whether direct or indirect. Although the presence of the mentions is not as frequent as in the analyzed discography of Cornell, where the albums often contained over a dozen references, Apple’s musical output nonetheless frequently includes the topic in its lyrics. Generally speaking, the prevalence of the identified mentions has increased with time, as the two albums released in the 1990s each contained seven mental health references, while the music released in the 2000s contained 10 references, and the 2010s had 12 references. However, Apple’s latest release, representing the 2020s, showcased a slight decrease with eight references. Nonetheless, on average, the number of mentions have slightly increased across the discography, with each album integrating the topic numerous times. On the next page (see graph 2), an overview of the development of mental health references can be found, with each bar representing a chronological representation of the frequency across the five albums.

Graph 2

A chronological overview of the mental health references on the five studio albums released between 1996 and 2020



With 37 metaphors out of a total of 46 references, it is clear that, not unlike the results of the previous analysis, mental health is more than often addressed through a synthesis of wordplay and imagery, where scenarios, experiences, and sentiments are poetically embellished rather than mentioned point-blank. Nonetheless, the topic is still frequently included, offering many personal (first-person) descriptions that hold the potential to provide relatable and accessible portrayals to the ears of listeners around the world. In this regard it is interesting that, even though many of the songs deal with serious and heavy topics, the songs tend to sound motivational, where wondrous melodies are taken from discordant chord progressions, offering a distinct and undefinable sound. With that, despite what the lines highlighted throughout the analysis might suggest, the songs tend to leave the listener elevated and inspired, with Apple even revealing in a televised interview that she writes many of the songs as a pep talk to herself (qtd. in “Fiona Apple and Craig Ferguson Interview”). However, when discussing the

motivational aspects of the music and the general importance of the inclusion of mental health as a topic, it is important to note that it brings with it a certain responsibility and relevance. Throughout Apple's entire discography mental health is dealt with in the lyrics in some sort of fashion, with that, it should not merely be seen as a call for awareness, as it also contributes to the overall narrative, providing us with accurate descriptions, and moreover, addressing and destigmatizing the gendered nature of mental illness narratives. This is especially prevalent in celebrity culture, where there remains the tendency to associate the psychological turmoil of male stars with strength of will and artistic authenticity, while a mental breakdown by a female celebrity is often equated to instability, failure and hysteria (Franssen 104). Taking this into consideration, the juxtaposition offered in Apple's music becomes even more interesting, as the combination of serious and heavy lyrics combined with cheerful and upbeat melodies ultimately offers a message of acceptance and empowerment, thus simultaneously bringing awareness to mental health issues while also addressing outdated and nonsensical gender-related stereotypes through artistic expression.

Chapter 3

A Lyrical Exploration of Kendrick Lamar's Music

Kendrick Lamar, born Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, on June 17, 1987, in Compton, California, is an American rapper and songwriter. Named after the singer-songwriter Eddie Kendricks of The Temptations (XXL), Lamar has a perdurable affiliation with music, developing an interest in music at a very young age, and witnessing his predecessors advance the culture of music at the age of eight, as he observed Tupac Shakur and Dr. Dre film the video for “California Love” in his neighborhood (Capital Xtra). Although this experience fueled Lamar with the motivation to pursue music, his English classes in elementary school introduced him to poetry, allowing Lamar to connect literacy to hip-hop, as it helped him navigate the social dynamics of his neighborhood through creative writing (Moore). Through the experimentation of poetry and hip-hop, Lamar, under the pseudonym K. Dot, started to make a name for himself in the hip-hop realm, releasing three solo mixtapes and one collaborate effort with Jay Rock between the years of 2003 and 2009. However, shortly after the release of his mixtape *C4*, Lamar decided to change his stage name to his birth name. His first full-length output as Kendrick Lamar was 2010's *Overly Dedicated*, which is a 14-track mixtape featuring solo songs and collaborations with artists such as Jhene Aikó, Schoolboy Q, Ab-Soul, and more.

Although *Overly Dedicated* already garnered Lamar attention from the music industry, his first official studio album was *Section.80*, which was released on July 2, 2011, and contains 16 tracks with similar guest features as on *Overly Dedicated*; from Ab-Soul to Schoolboy Q. Even though in the current musical climate Lamar is considered a universally acclaimed household name, his artistic capabilities were not fully recognized at the time of *Section.80*. The album was released independently through Top Dawg Entertainment and exclusively released on iTunes, debuting at 113 on the Billboard 200 charts and selling a mere 5,000 copies

in its first week (Payne). Even though, commercially speaking, the album did not perform all that well, especially considering the popularity, cultural impact, and relevance Lamar would build up in the following years, his debut album nonetheless provides an early foray into his complex artistry, as Lamar includes varying topics across the songs, as for example the song “A.D.H.D” is intended as a reference to the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, with the lyrics offering commentary on drug abuse. Moreover, many of the lyrics and songs throughout the album discuss a particular theme or topic, ranging from descriptive generational issues to loosely-tied provided narratives.

Over a year later, on October 22, 2012, Kendrick Lamar released his sophomore studio album *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*. Even though it is not Lamar’s official debut album, it serves as his first album released on a major label, and for many music listeners, *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* is the album that introduced them to the lyrical craftsmanship and musical creativity of Lamar. Much like the albums to follow, Kendrick’s sophomore studio album was released through Top Dawg, Aftermath and Interscope Records. Naturally, the backing of major labels allowed Lamar to further advance his artistry and collaborative efforts, working with producers and artists such as Dr. Dre, Pharrell, Drake, and many more. Both critically and commercially *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* made an enormous impact, earning Lamar the highest first-week hip-hop album sales of 2012 for a male artist, along with critics describing it as entertaining and forward-thinking; a cohesive body of work that is “complexly arranged and sonically fitting, foregrounding Kendrick’s vivid lyricism and amazing control of cadence” (XXL, “Kendrick Lamar’s *Good Kid, m.A.A.d City* Receives XXL Rating”). Additionally, the album received seven Grammy nominations, marking Lamar’s first taste of the many accolades he would go on to achieve. In this regard, his sophomore release showcased an enormous growth compared to the earlier work of his discography, both lyrically and sonically, with the album echoing the sound of his West Coast predecessors, while simultaneously offering a low-key atmospheric

contemporary sound, inspired by everything from the 1990s' West Coast funk to Atlanta's extraterrestrial feel courtesy of OutKast. Lyrically, the album tends to include autobiographical elements, offering an extensive perspective on the merciless environment that he, and many people across the United States, have grown up in, ultimately describing everything from economic inequality to gang violence, through which Lamar tells a non-linear story fueled with recollections of his precarious environment.

Lamar's third studio album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, was released on March 16, 2015. The album introduced listeners to the versatility of Lamar's music as, even though it is still considered a hip-hop album, it effortlessly integrates many other musical styles, with songs audibly reminiscent of soul, funk, (cosmic) jazz, and spoken word. This musical experimentation becomes evident in the credits of the songs, with the album including contributions from artists such as Kamashi Washington, Anna Wise, Ronald Isley, George Clinton, Bilal, Flying Lotus, Thundercat (Apple Music "To Pimp a Butterfly), and many more. Lyrically, *To Pimp a Butterfly* expands on familiar topics dealt with on the previous albums, as Lamar offers social and political commentary on relevant and personal themes, including, but not limited to, racial inequality, mental health, and institutional racism. Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly* embodies musical innovation and cultural progression, solidifying his place in the world of art as a contemporary visual poet, as it lyrically mixes critical race-theory, theology and history with extended metaphors disrupting meanings of morality and trauma, as the songwriting "seems almost designed for parsing in a college classroom" (Kang). Whereas sonically the album manages to unite past and present African American musical styles in a dynamic relationship of nostalgic revivalism and vanguardism (Fulton 1), which, through the combination of lyrics and music, reaches into Black empowerment and makes it inescapable (Hope).

Kendrick Lamar's fourth studio album, *DAMN.*, was released on April 14, 2017. Although, in between *To Pimp a Butterfly* and *DAMN.*, Lamar released another album, 2016's *untitled unmastered*, this release merely functioned as a compilation album, consisting of "eight demos of unused songs from the *To Pimp a Butterfly* recording sessions" (Genius "untitled unmastered"). With that in mind, lyrically *DAMN.* continues Lamar's inclusion of social topics, as he explores a person's inner struggle with good and evil, while evoking vivid descriptions of the political landscape, religion and inequality. However, sonically the album strays from the experimental jazz and funk sound that listeners have become acquainted with through *To Pimp a Butterfly* and *untitled unmastered*, unearthing itself as a "widescreen masterpiece of rap, full of expensive beats, furious rhymes, and peerless storytelling" (Trammell). On *DAMN.*, Lamar, to a certain extent, returns to the rap-oriented sound of *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*, while incorporating elements of pop, contemporary rhythm and blues, and trap. In a 2017 interview with *Vulture*, after the release of *DAMN.*, Lamar spoke on his increasing musical experimentation and lyrical growth:

In my early years, I was just all about the raps. I didn't care about nothing else. But when you get into the world of songwriting, and making material that's universal, you gotta be hands on and know the different sounds and frequencies, what makes people move, what melodies stick with you, taking the higher octaves and the lower octaves and learning how to intertwine that in a certain frequency, how to manipulate sound to your advantage. (qtd. in Barker)

The unique blend of rap, trap, r&b, and pop, is strengthened by the many contributors on the album, as it features production credits from artists such as Mike Will Made It, Sounwave, James Blake, Greg Kurstin, Steve Lacy, and The Alchemist, along with vocal contributions from the likes of Rihanna and U2 (Apple Music "DAMN."). Aside from widespread critical acclaim, Lamar's fourth studio album marked a commercial high, as the song "HUMBLE"

became his first number-one single on the Billboard Hot 100 as a main artist, along with *DAMN*, becoming 2017's most popular album across all genres based on album sales and audio on-demand streaming activity (Billboard).

On May 13, 2022, Lamar's fifth studio album, *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers*, was released. Compared to the previous releases, Lamar slowed his pace, as instead of one or two years in between each album, it took over five years before *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* was released. During this period, Lamar was suffering from a crippling writers block, explicitly addressing this on the album, as on "Worldwide Steppers" he raps "Writer's block for two years, nothin' moved me / Asked God to speak through me" (00:42 – 00:45). Despite Lamar's disappearance from the musical spotlight, *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* was anticipated by many, and offered another meaningful addition to Lamar's versatile discography. *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* consist of 18 songs and functions as a double album, with both sides containing nine songs. Furthermore, the album accumulates the sounds that Lamar has experimented with on earlier albums, evoking minimalist production with elements of blues, funk, jazz, r&b, soul, trap, and rap. Moreover, with contributions from frequent collaborators like Thundercat, Sounwave, and The Alchemist, the album manages to mix old influences with new, which is strengthened by the features on the songs, ranging from spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle to actress and dancer Taylour Paige, in addition to musical features such as Kodak Black, Sampha, Summer Walker, Beth Gibbons, and more (Apple Music, "Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers"). Lamar's fifth studio album is often viewed as his most personal body of work: "part political analysis, part social critique, with a dash of familial observations. But from start to finish, it's all therapy" (Shorter). Although Lamar has always been an outspoken musician, *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* takes it up a notch, as he speaks candidly on therapeutic breakthroughs, cancel culture, capitalism, gender identity, toxic masculinity, parental issues, childhood trauma, sexual addiction, and much more. The importance, relevance and willingness

of Lamar's unequivocal topical honesty on issues internal to the Black community and beyond should not be underestimated, especially in a polarized society, as Anthony B. Pinn, an American professor working at the intersections of African American religion, constructive theology, and humanist thought, argues:

What we hide, what we bury deep inside, hurts us. So, he exposes this mindset, and points out our humanity by naming our pain. The album tells our stories and in doing so holds up a mirror – making us see ourselves through all our anxieties, our insecurities, our wants, our needs; but that mirror also reflects back our strengths. (qtd. in Yueng)

Besides the several released studio albums, a compilation album, multiple EPs and Mixtapes, Lamar has done a wide-ranging variety of creative work; from curating the soundtrack to 2018's *Black Panther* to guest featuring on dozens and dozens of songs, working with everyone from Beyoncé and Fredo Santana to Imagine Dragons and Taylor Swift. Throughout his career, Lamar has sold millions of records, and won nearly every award imaginable, including 39 Grammy nominations, of which he won 14 (Mayfield). Lamar's lyrical craftsmanship has earned him the recognition of millions of ears around the world, even becoming the first pop-musician in history to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music, as he won the award in 2018 for the album *DAMN.*, which the Pulitzer Prize board describes as “a virtuosic song collection unified by its vernacular authenticity and rhythmic dynamism that offers affecting vignettes capturing the complexity of modern African American life” (The Pulitzer Prizes).

Although Lamar's incredible musical diversity, as described through the paragraphs above, contributes to his critical acclaim and popularity, it is also the conjunction of his genuine and reputable songwriting that manages to have a profound impact on people. In this regard, the topic of mental health, which Lamar has openly spoken on and included throughout his discography, plays an ever-present role. Referred to by some as “the street poet of mental health”, Lamar's subject material, through his rich narratives, relate to important mental health

themes, including depression, addiction, and resilience (Sule and Inkster 496). Lamar grew up in a high-crime region of Compton, California, where, ironically, his parents had moved to escape a violent milieu in Chicago (Bauer). Growing up in Compton in the 80s and 90s meant that Lamar was surrounded by conflict, as poverty and gang wars waged the streets, with Lamar witnessing his first murder at the age of five:

It was outside my apartment unit. A guy was out there serving his narcotics and somebody rolled up with a shotgun and blew his chest out. Admittedly, it done something to me right then and there. It let me know that this is not only something that I'm looking at, but it's something that maybe I have to get used to — you dig what I'm saying? (Lamar qtd. in Greene)

The environment and period Lamar grew up in was extremely tumultuous. Violence was nearly at an all-time-high, as in the 90s, the decade Lamar spend his childhood years in, the murder rate in Compton at times reached above 80 out of 100,000 (Macrotrends), while in comparison, New York City, in 2018, had a murder rate of 3.5 per 100,000 people (Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice). Moreover, Los Angeles during the early and mid-90s was a divided place to be, with riots and civil disturbances occurring frequently, with the Rodney King Riots, which were a response to the acquittal of four white policemen connected with the severe beating of an African American man (Wallenfeldt), marking one of the deadliest race riots in American history. Being exposed to a world encircling adversity, inequality, suffering and death, had a profound impact on Lamar, and many of these experiences are reflected on throughout his entire discography, offering a confronting glimpse into the observed social issues. However, enduring these traumatic events, and balancing the life and responsibilities he has now, have had a significant psychological impact, as Lamar, in a 2015 interview with MTV, opened up about his struggle with depression and suicidal-thoughts, as he specifically refers to the song “u” on *To Pimp a Butterfly*, in which Lamar recounts detailed feelings of depression and suicidal

thinking: “I pulled that song, not only from previous experiences, but I think my whole life” (qtd. in MTV). Lamar later extended on this in an interview with *Rolling Stone*, stating that it was one of the hardest songs he had ever written due to its inquiry in personal and dark moments, filled with insecurities, selfishness and let-downs, and although depressing, it helped him to cope with it (Lamar qtd. in Eells). Another pertinent example of Lamar’s enclosure of mental health can be given through his latest album, with the narrative of *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers* entirely being structured around Lamar’s therapy, through which he opens up the conversation around mental health and treatment, as many people, especially in the African American community, are concerned about stigma associated with mental illness and low endorsement of psychological openness (Ward et al. 9). In this regard, Lamar’s discography underlines several important themes, helping to understand the day-to-day internal and external struggles of his community. Furthermore, through the vessel of hip-hop, it “might also be a way for young people to understand and consider their own vulnerability, resilience, and life choices in a culturally relevant and easily accessible manner” (Sule and Inkster 497).

Selection of Discography

In line with the previous chapters, it is paramount to look at which songs on the studio albums will be analyzed. In this regard, the track listing, song names, songwriting credits and lyrics of Lamar’s five studio albums, consisting of *Section.80* (2011), *Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City* (2012), *To Pimp a Butterfly* (2015), *DAMN.* (2017), and *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers* (2022), are once more derived from the versions available on Apple Music, with additional information pertaining to the lyrics derived from Genius. The to be analyzed versions of the five studio albums adhere to the original releases, thus not taking into account deluxe versions or bonus tracks. At first glance, the selection of the discography for the analysis of Lamar seems complex compared to the previous chapter due to the collaborative nature of hip-hop, the genre that

Lamar is predominantly associated with. Even though, as has become evident through the introduction of this chapter, Lamar is an artist that approaches the musical territory without restrictions, efficiently creating a diversified and unique sound, he, at the core, is an artist within the realm of hip-hop. Due to the enormous size and dominance of hip-hop in music, along with the increasing relevance and influence it has on popular culture, one could argue whether or not it is justified to categorize all the varying artists who, to different degrees, include rap in their music under the banner of one genre. Nonetheless, musical genres are a product of communities, they are defined by the accumulation of the attributes of artists and the music they play, along with the organizational environment and institutional practices that arise within it (Lena 15). Furthermore, artists depend upon the social system in which they create their magic (3), and certain genres, such as hip-hop and jazz, are characterized by their interactivity and collaborative structure. Subsequently, “collaboration in hip-hop is an essential mechanism for interaction and communication of shared ideologies, attitudes, and behaviors within the scene” (Smith qtd. in Gienapp et al. 11). Moreover, due to Lamar’s tendency to experiment with concept albums and narratives, there are, on various occasions, skits and interludes performed by other artists present on several albums. With that, each of the five studio albums include various features on multiple songs. The first studio album, *Section.80*, contains seven features, of which one song, “Ab-Soul’s Outro” is predominately performed by Ab-Soul, while artists such as RZA and Schoolboy Q are included as individual verses on the songs (Apple Music, “Section.80”). The second album, *Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City*, includes five guest verses, including Drake, Dr. Dre, Anna Wise, Jay Rock, and MC Eiht (Apple Music, “Good Kid, M.A.A.D City”). Lamar’s third album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, has 11 guest features, including the likes of Rapsody, James Fauntleroy, Snoop Dogg, and many more (Apple Music, “To Pimp a Butterfly”). The fourth studio album, *DAMN.*, has three features from other artists, while Lamar’s fifth studio album, *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers*, contains 11 features, of which two

pertain to songs predominantly featuring another artist, as the interludes on the album, “Rich” and “Savior”, are performed by Kodak Black and Baby Keem respectively (Apple Music, “Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers”). Although, according to the songwriting credits of each studio album, the songs are written by Lamar and others, the additionally attributed songwriting credits often are due to the sampling and interpolation of songs. Particularly pertaining to the lyrics, thus excluding the composition of the instrumentals, Lamar is credited as the main songwriter on each and every song that he performs across his discography. Therefore, all the songs featured on the original versions of the studio albums, excluding the previously highlighted songs performed by other artists, will be included in the analysis. Additionally, the guest verses featured on the songs will not be analyzed, instead, Lamar’s parts on these songs, which are the product of his own intellect, will be incorporated. A complete overview of the albums and the omitted songs can be found below (see table 6).

Table 6

Albums and omitted songs

Album:	Year:	Number of songs	Track(s) omitted:	Reasoning:
<i>Section.80</i>	2011	16	15	Contains song performed by another artist.
<i>Good Kid, M.A.A.D City</i>	2012	12	-	
<i>To Pimp a Butterfly</i>	2015	16	-	-
<i>DAMN.</i>	2017	14	-	-
<i>Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers</i>	2022	18	6, 13	Contains songs performed by other artists.

Analysis

Across the five analyzed albums, a total of 71 mental health references were identified. Below (see table 7), an overview can be found of all the categorizations made across Lamar's extensive discography. Moreover, the following paragraphs will provide a rundown of each album, highlighting noteworthy lyrics, and where needed, an additional explanation of the identified categorizations.

Table 7

Mental health references across the five analyzed albums

Album:	Category 1: Anxious thinking	Category 2: Depressive thinking	Category 3: Suicidal ideation	Category 4: Metaphor	Total:
<i>Section.80</i>		1	1	9	11
<i>Good Kid, MAAD City</i>		2		9	11
<i>To Pimp a Butterfly</i>		8	6	5	19
<i>DAMN.</i>	4			5	9
<i>Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers</i>	3			18	21
Total:	7	11	7	46	71
Average:	1.4	2.2	1.4	9.2	14.2

2011 and 2012

Kendrick Lamar's debut album, 2011's *Section.80*, contains a total of 11 mental health references across the 16 songs featured on the album. The vast majority of those references, nine in total, are categorized as mental health metaphors, while the other two remaining references are equally divided across the categories of depressive thinking and suicidal ideation. Throughout the songs featured on the album, Lamar adheres to a theme that is implied by the title of the album: *Section.80* is a combination of Section 8 Housing and the 1980s, which is the decade Lamar was born in (Genius, "Section.80 by Kendrick Lamar"). On the album Lamar explores the issues and hardships of his generation, of which many were caused by policies and

political choices implemented by the Reagan administration, as he was responsible for drastically reducing funding for public housing, along with widening the gap between the rich and everyone else, and deregulating the financial industry (Dreier). In this regard, Lamar delves into relevant topics, ranging from poverty and racism to women's issues and the lingering effects of the crack epidemic. The third song on the album, "A.D.H.D", provides commentary on the medicated and troubled youth of his generation, referring back to the crack epidemic of the 80s and 90s. Throughout the song Lamar includes several lines that are indicative of a mental health reference, with the first verse describing an acquaintance that relies on self-medicating to escape the experienced pain: "Trippin' off that shit again / Pick him up, then I set him in cold water / Then I order someone to bring him Vicodin / Hope that take the pain away / From the feelin' that he feel today" (00:18 – 00:27). As outlined in the theoretical part of the introduction, research suggests a correlation between substance abuse and mental illness, with drug use alleviating the unpleasant symptoms of a mental disorder (Primack et al. 2). In this regard, the provided verse by Lamar offers a description that is suggestive of a reliance on drugs to escape reality. With that, the song offers even more direct references to mental health, as Lamar, on multiple occasions, mentions the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, also known as ADHD. The final lines of the second verse provide one of the references to this disorder, with Kendrick rapping "You know why we crack babies? Because we born in the '80s / The ADHD crazy" (02:09 – 02:23). Although he clearly links the disorder to the 80s generation and the accompanied substance abuse issues, he also offers ambiguity through his pronunciation and homophonous wordplay, with the final mention of the disorder encompassing the interpretation of both 80 and ADHD, thus referring back to the tumultuous time period and the concept of the album.

There are numerous other references included on the album. The song "Ronald Reagan Era" features interpretable lines describing drug use to alleviate mental pain, as Lamar raps

“Take it in vain, Vicodins couldn't ease the pain” (00:51 – 00:53) and “He blowin' on stress, hopin' to ease the stress” (02:09 – 02:11). Moreover, songs such as “Kush & Corinthians (His Pain)” and “HiiiPower” feature lyrics in which Lamar relates mental struggles to segregational and racial issues. From a verse describing suicidal ideation due to the ever-present elements in his milieu; “A condom, a Rollie, pain, a fat blunt and a MAC-11 / That's all I see in my life and they tell me to make it right / But I'm right on the edge of Everest and I might jump tonight / Have you ever had known a saint that was taking sinner's advice?” (02:18 – 02:28), to lines indicating how the rarely highlighted societal issues have physical and mental implications; “My issue isn't televised and you ain't gotta tell the wise / How to stay on beat, because our life's an instrumental / This is physical and mental, I won't sugarcoat it” (01:02 – 01:10).

Lamar's second studio album and first major label album, 2012's *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*, has a total of 11 mental health references, of which nine are considered metaphors, while the remaining two are categorized as indicative of depression and depressive thinking. *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* is executive produced by legendary musician and fellow Compton native Dr. Dre, and the album's narrative focuses on K. Dot's (his younger self) transition to Kendrick Lamar, as he embarks on a journey to break free from the hazardous and conflicted environment of Compton (Bassil). Furthermore, the narrative starts at the end and is not completely chronological, as Lamar recounts stories from his younger perspective, along with loosely scattered tracks told from the viewpoint of his adult self, such as “Bitch Don't Kill My Vibe” and “Compton”. Moreover, through the exploration of Lamar's childhood memories of Compton, the listener, once again, is exposed to societal and personal issues, as he raps about crime, death, drug abuse, insecurities, peer pressure, police brutality and more. In this regard, there are numerous metaphors that share a similar sentiment as the ones discovered on *Section.80*, with Lamar including many lines referring to drug abuse to alleviate mental pain. Examples are present in multitude, with lines such as “All I see in this room: 20's, Xannies and

these 'shrooms / Grown-up candy for pain, can we live in a sane society? / It's entirely stressful upon my brain" (02:32 – 02:40) featured on "Good Kid", along with descriptive verses included on "Swimming Pools", a song that entirely revolves around substance abuse: "All I have in life is my new appetite for failure / And I got hunger pain that grow insane, tell me, do that sound familiar? / If it do, then you're like me, makin' excuse that your relief / Is in the bottom of a bottle and the greenest indo leaf / As the window open I release everything that corrode inside of me" (04:05 – 04:22).

Besides lyrics hinting at mental health issues drowned by the use and misuse of substances, Lamar also explicitly delves into multiple perspectives, as he describes the turmoil of his personal childhood recollections, along with those of the people he grew up with. This becomes especially evident through "Sing About Me, I'm Dying of Thirst", which is the tenth track on the album, and is compiled of two separate songs. In an interview with *Power 106's Big Boy's Neighborhood*, which is a popular radio show in the Los Angeles region, Lamar said the following on the song: "That's a real turning point of the album. Before I became this person with a mature aspect on life, it was a dark place I came from, a place of negativity, a place of being unruly" (qtd. in Horowitz). Lamar highlights this darkness and negativity multiple times throughout the song, of which two particular verses describe a state of despair and depressive thinking. The first of the two is mentioned relatively early on in the song, with Lamar rapping "I'm hopin' that I can borrow / A peace of mind, I'm behind on what's really important / My mind is really distorted / I find nothing but trouble in my life" (00:41 – 00:49), which is later on followed by "I suffer a lot / And every day that glass mirror get tougher to watch / I tie my stomach in knots / And I'm not sure why I'm infatuated with death / My imagination is surely an aggravation of threats" (04:51 – 05:03). Through these lines Lamar describes a distorted mind that succumbs to trouble, as he annotated these specific lines to be about his mind taking off and wandering towards negativity (qtd. in Genius, "Kendrick Lamar – Sing About Me, I'm

Dying of Thirst”). Furthermore, the sentiments described in these lyrics (e.g., the loss of hope, references to death, feelings of sadness, and thoughts encumbered by distortion) are in line with many of the diagnostic criteria for depression, as even recurring thoughts of death and a diminished ability to think are among the main symptoms (American Psychiatric Association 719).

2015, 2017, and 2022

The third studio album, 2015’s *To Pimp a Butterfly*, marks a unique point in both Lamar’s musical output and the three analyzed discographies, as it is the first analyzed album where the coding categories of depression and suicidal ideation are more frequently present than the mental health metaphors identified on the album. *To Pimp a Butterfly* is an album that carries with it a social relevance that exceeds beyond music, with the album exploring themes of self-love and self-hate, depression, oppression, fame, violence, and much more. However, what is particularly unique about Lamar’s inclusion of certain themes related to mental wellbeing is his ability to describe it in relation to societal factors. See, Lamar’s lyrics, especially on this album, do not necessarily speak on mental health from a medical standpoint; as it rather describes the serious mental implications that injustices of society carry with. In this regard, the album has a total of 19 identified mental health references, of which eight are categorized as indicative of depression and depressive thinking, while six varying lines and verses are categorized as suicidal ideation, with the remaining five references regarding mental health metaphors. Although not every song contains references to mental health, they do revolve around serious and relevant issues deserving of the listeners ears, offering perspectives that are often underexposed and, if able to penetrate the ears of conflicting sides of society, might even help to evoke empathy and understanding in the struggle of others. With that being said, there are a great deal of direct references on *To Pimp a Butterfly*, ranging from vivid

recollections of depression to suicidal tendencies. For example, a line like “I’ve been dealing with depression ever since an adolescent” (02:44 – 02:46) on “i”, or a line like “Maybe I’m paranoid, ha, maybe I don’t need you anyway / Don’t lie to me, I’m suicidal anyway” (04:35 – 04:39) on “Momma”, are both clearly interpretable. However, several songs are made up of a mixture of direct references and descriptions indicative of one, especially evident on the song “u”, which acts as an intentional contrast to the song “i”. In this regard, before we delve deeper into some of the lyric on “u”, which is the song that has the most references on the entire album, it is important to understand Lamar’s intention behind “u” and “i”:

The record feels great; it feels good, but it comes from a place of depression. It comes from a place of insecurity. Not only for [other people], but for myself. It’s a lot of things that I deal with personally. That you deal with, that everyone in this room deals with. So, it touches on so many different things, as far as equality within us as human beings, and accepting one another. People that want to commit suicide; people that just don’t respect themselves or like the way they look, feel, talk, dress, and not accept who they are. We all put on this world to be kings, and walk in his image, and that’s how it starts – that song. (qtd. in Songfacts)

Whereas “i” sonically and lyrically is intended to lift up the listener, the song “u” offers a complete contrast, as Lamar, rather than offering an anthem of peace, positivity and prosperity, dwells on the negative thoughts that are haunting his mind. The song features several verses in which Lamar vividly and accurately describes the feeling and mind state of a depressed individual, told from his own perspective and experiences through the combination of first (I) and second person (you) perspectives. The references are embedded in descriptive verses, ranging from “I place blame on you still, place shame on you still / Feel like you ain’t shit, feel like you don’t feel / Confidence in yourself, breakin’ on marble floors” (00:43 – 00:50) to “I fuckin’ tell you fuckin’ failure—you ain’t no leader! / I never liked you, forever despise you—I

don't need ya! / The world don't need ya, don't let them deceive ya” (01:09 – 01:15). Throughout the song there are many other references featured, including direct mentions of depression and suicide, however, the highlighted lines are far more descriptive, as Lamar perceptibly evokes his inner turmoil through illeism, allowing for a glance into the complexity of one’s own perception: “The self is experienced differently in depression. It is infused with a pervasive low mood, inhabiting a world that lacks possibility for positive experiences, and structured by negative self-related thoughts” (Davey and Harrison 2). Although rooted in darkness and turmoil, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, through its chronological assimilation and thematic and lyrical development, remind the listener that after “u” (depression) there will always be “i” (hope and prosperity).

Lamar’s fourth studio album, 2017’s *DAMN.*, sees a sharp decline in mental health references compared to the previous album. The album, through 14 tracks carried out over wax, contains a total of nine mental health references, of which four are categorized as anxiety and anxious thinking, and five are categorized as metaphors. With the nine identified mentions on *DAMN.*, the album marks the lowest reference count across the four analyzed albums so far. However, the decline in references can partially be explained through the intention of the album, as it generally has a more commercial sound than the previous albums. Fellow musician, friend, and labelmate of Lamar, Ab-Soul, said the following on the purpose of *DAMN.*: “He’s been Kendrick Lamar for a while, and Kendrick Lamar is the good kid, he’s the more introspective kid. I think he was trying to get back to K. Dot, get back to his roots, sag his pants, really roll through the hood for this album” (qtd. in Neubeck). Nonetheless, despite the album having a more commercial sound, Lamar still eloquently explores themes, with the album centering around the duality of wickedness versus weakness. This theme is amplified throughout the album, and whether the listener plays the album in a chronological or backward order, both endings see Lamar die by a gunshot, with the album switching between tracks that

either showcase Lamar's wickedness or weakness. Nevertheless, there are still multiple songs present containing various lyrics and lines that represent a mental health reference, however, similar to the analysis of Cornell in the first chapter, the context of the songs provide insights into the possible interpretations. Take "XXX" for example, on which Lamar rhymes "compulsive disorder, sons and daughters / Barricaded blocks and borders" (03:04 – 03:10). Here the mention of compulsive disorder, which is a recognized mental health issue, is not intended as such, with the song and verse describing political problems present in the United States. Therefore, it is deemed more logical to interpret this as a metaphor for the obsession of the US to repeat problematic behavior over and over again, such as the ongoing and inhumane border issue. In this regard, there are two particular songs that stand out in terms of references, with those being "FEEL" and "FEAR". Both songs contain a mixture of metaphors and categorizations of anxious thinking, with Lamar expressing the many doubts and feelings that succumb his mind: from "I feel like a chip on my shoulders / I feel like I'm losin' my focus / I feel like I'm losin' my patience / I feel like my thoughts in the basement" (00:48 – 00:55) to "I feel like it's just me / Look, I feel like I can't breathe / Look, I feel like I can't sleep / Look, I feel heartless, often off this / Feelin' of fallin', of fallin' apart with / Darkest hours, lost it" (02:11 – 02:20). Although this sentiment is present throughout multiple other verses featured on "FEEL", these examples highlight the conflict and desperation provided by Lamar, with the accumulation of the anxiously described feelings serving as an indication of anxiety. Whether Lamar describes losing focus or patience, and difficulty breathing, sleeping and thinking, all these aspects are considered to be additional features that an individual with a generalized anxiety disorder finds difficult to control (American Psychiatric Association 835). Moreover, the description of anxiousness is continued on "FEAR", with Lamar rapping "I'm talkin' fear, fear of losin' creativity / I'm talkin' fear, fear of missin' out on you and me / I'm talkin' fear, fear of losin' loyalty from pride / 'Cause my DNA won't let me involve in the light of God / I'm

talkin' fear, fear that my humbleness is gone / I'm talkin' fear, fear that love ain't livin' here no more / I'm talkin' fear, fear that it's wickedness or weakness / Fear, whatever it is, both is distinctive” (05:19 – 05:45). Whether or not these lines count as a reference to anxiety depends on the expression of fear presented in the lyrics, as “fear is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas anxiety is anticipation of future threat” (830). “In case of fear, the body has a clear way to react – getting away from the threat. In case of anxiety, however, there is not a clear threat, so there is nothing to get away from” (Fokkinga and Desmet, “Fear - Emotion Typology”). In this regard, the expression of fear described by Lamar does not relate to imminent threats, as it essentially describes the fear for uncertainty, thus embodying the descriptive fear of anxiety.

Lamar’s fifth studio album, 2022’s *Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers*, beats the previous high noted on *To Pimp a Butterfly*, as the album has 21 references. The vast majority of those, 18 in total, pertain to mental health metaphors, while the remaining three references are categorized as lines indicative of anxiety and anxious thinking. The album is structured around the narrative of Lamar’s therapy sessions, with the album opening with the line “I hope you find some peace of mind in this lifetime” (00:00 – 00:09) on “United in Grief”, which is repeated as the album progresses. Throughout the album, and through the suggestion of therapy, Lamar talks about many topics that are either directly or indirectly related to mental health. As the narrative on the album progresses, Lamar’s initial reluctance towards therapy subsides as he opens up about generational trauma, lust and substance addictions, sexual abuse, acceptance of gender dysphoria, and much more. Although all the tracks on the album are interesting, there are several songs that are topical and strongly relate to mental health. The song “Count Me Out” is accompanied by a music video in which Lamar visits his therapist, played by Hellen Mirren, and the lyrics within reflect the interpretation of a patient opening up: “I care too much, wanna share too much, in my head too much / I shut down too, I ain't there too much / I'm a complex

soul, they layered me up / Then broke me down, and morality's dust, I lack in trust / (*And I'm tripping and falling*)” (00:49 – 01:00), along with “Miss Regrets, I believe that you done me wrong (Miss Regrets) / Miss Regrets, can you please exit out my home? (Miss Regrets) / Miss Regret, I think I'm better off alone (Miss Regrets) / (Miss Regret) Miss Regret, I got these deep regrets / (*And I'm tripping and falling*)” (03:59 - 04:15). Here, the constant rumination of either past or present regret is indicative of anxiety due to its persistent nature rooted in nervousness, whereas the previous lines are regarded as a metaphor due to the general description of mental struggles applicable to a multitude of illnesses.

Furthermore, “Father Time”, the fifth track on the album, sees Lamar exploring the ingrained toxic masculinity that is often passed on from father to son and generation to generation, with lines such as “Oh, this the part where mental stability meets talent / Oh, this the part, he breaks my humility just for practice / Tactics we learned together, sore losers forever, daddy issues” (01:12 – 01:22), and “Daddy issues, hid my emotions, never expressed myself / Men should never show feelings, being sensitive never helped” (02:00 – 02:06). Subsequently, the rigid definition of masculinity and the stigma surrounding emotional vulnerability are closely related to mental health, especially within the African American community. In this regard, Diefenbach and Leventhal propose that an individual’s beliefs about mental health are derived from the ideas and thoughts that are informed by experience, cultural tradition, education, and acquaintances (e.g. family and friends) (qtd. in Ward and Besson 343). This means that an individual’s background, to a certain extent, dictates their stance on mental health. According to White, there is often a reluctance among African American communities to seek both physical and mental health care: the stigma that seeking mental health care is viewed as a weakness is a contributing factor to this reluctance, and is rooted in a survivalist mentality that is born from systematic oppression and chronic racism (qtd. in University of Southern California). Consequently, Lamar offers a different perspective on the stigmatization

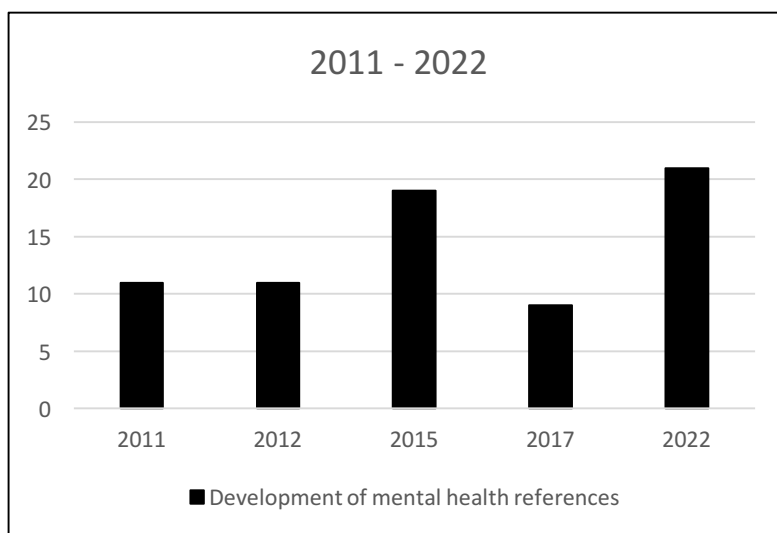
of mental struggles in the African American community, setting a transformative and positive example that reframes the cultural perception related to the often-confronted territorial skepticism. By shifting the narrative through art, Lamar breaks the generational curse, destigmatizes mental health care (i.e. therapy and counseling), and lets the listeners now that it is time to let the healing begin.

Conclusion

In line with the analyses of Cornell and Apple, the lyrics in Lamar's discography contain many references. Generally speaking, the prevalence of these references has increased in time, with *Section.80* and *Good Kid, MAAD City*, each containing 11 references, while *To Pimp a Butterfly* has 19 references, *DAMN.* has nine references, and *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers* has 21 references. *To Pimp a Butterfly* and *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers* stand out from the rest, as they contain far more lines indicative of mental health than the other albums. Below (see graph 3), an overview of the development of mental health references can be found.

Graph 3

A chronological overview of the identified mental health references across the five studio albums



Once again, just as in the analyses of Cornell and Apple, the majority of the references are categorized as mental health metaphors. Out of the 71 references across the 76 songs (of which three were mostly performed by others) featured on the studio albums, 46 lyrics are metaphors, with 11 categorizations of depressive thinking, seven categorizations of anxious thinking, and seven categorizations related to suicidal ideation. However, what makes Lamar's references so unique is the confrontational nature of the music, as it is a culmination of culture and representation. Although Lamar does speak on the experience of aspects such as depression and suicidal thoughts in both a direct and indirect manner, he spends a great deal of his lyrics describing the societal factors that contain serious implications, among which many relate to mental damage and emotional trauma. Lamar approaches rap and poetry as a scholastic pursuit, where consciousness and ignorance are both thoroughly examined to provide insights and understanding in the perspective of urban American life in high-risk settings (i.e. characterized by high levels of substance abuse, violence, and poverty). In doing so, not merely by mentioning it, but also by subduing it in a variety of perspectives, social contexts, and viable knowledge of life, Lamar contributes to the acceptance of mental health and mental care. Through his thematic music and achieved cultural relevance, Lamar has exerted himself as a spokesperson of social injustices, showcasing the world how systematic problems and wrongdoings carry implications that exceed the surface, thus impacting all facets of life, including mental wellbeing. At its core, hip-hop serves as music that is characterized by objections to injustices and oppressions inflicted on certain individuals and groups (Stapleton 221), and Lamar's increasing inclusion of, and openness towards, mental health and the available care, helps to transform the narrative and perceived conventions, which becomes increasingly important once one realizes that African American adolescents living in high-risk settings have been found to experience depression at greater levels and at a disproportionately higher rate than adolescents from other racial or ethnic groups in the United States (Roberts et al. qtd. in Lindsey 459). With

African American adolescent boys being a particularly vulnerable group due to high-risk environments and a low social network support (Hammack et al. qtd. in Lindsey et al 459). With that, Kendrick Lamar's "powerful ability to navigate his mind, body, and spirit through life's obstacles to overcome environmental factors stacked up against his innocence has inspired a generation, and will continue to do so" (Sule 497).

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to provide insights into how the mental health representation in North American popular music, through the artistic self-expression of lyrics, has evolved from the 1980s to the present-day. Through the collected information, the research question and specific sub-questions can be answered in relation to the selected case studies, while commonalities and differences in the lyrics can provide both clues into the topical changes in relation to the progression of time, along with insights into artistic uniqueness and impact.

The results from the individual chapters highlight the prevalence of mental health references in the discographies of Chris Cornell, Fiona Apple, and Kendrick Lamar, and based on the acquired data, it becomes evident that, in all three case studies, the topic of mental wellbeing is included in the lyrics all throughout their musical work; from their first to last album. However, this does not automatically insinuate that the references have largely remained the same, and the prevalence does not fluctuate and increase with time. When strictly looking at the number of references identified throughout the three discographies, the statement that the inclusion of mental health in music has increased in line with the social awareness and openness, partially rings true, as the songs by Cornell, Apple, and Lamar, all, on average, see a chronological increase in mental health references; the topical discussion has become more prevalent with time. In both the cases of Cornell and Lamar, their latest released studio albums contain the highest number of mental health references. The first analyzed album of Cornell's discography, which was released in the 1980s, contained three identified mental health references, whereas his latest analyzed studio album, released in 2015, contained 23 mental health references. In the case of Lamar, the first analyzed studio album, released in 2011, contained 11 references, while his latest album, released in 2022, included 21 references. In this regard, out of the three selected artists, Apple is the only one whose latest work does not

offer the highest number of identified references, as the in 2020 released album consists of 8 references, while her first album comes in slightly lower with 7 references, and her album released in 2012 marking the highest number of references across her discography, with 12 in total. By having the data available of the frequency of references it becomes easier to state that the mental health inclusion in the discography of Cornell, Apple, and Lamar has increased with time and correlates with the overall acceptance and awareness of mental health issues among newer generations. Even if we were to accumulate all the references across the three discographies based on decades, the data would strengthen this belief, as it ultimately increases in a chronological manner: the 1980s, represented by the music of Cornell, had an average of 3 references. The 1990s, represented by the music of Cornell and Apple, had an average of 9.1 references, while the 2000s, which is represented by the same artists as the 1990s, had an average of 12.6 references. Furthermore, the 2010s, the only decade in which all three analyzed artists released studio albums containing original music, had an average of 13 references, while the 2020s, represented by Lamar and Apple, had an average of 14.5 references. However, it should be noted that this is solely representative of the aforementioned artists and their discographies, nonetheless, it provides insights into the music and topical development of the lyrics included by Cornell, Apple, and Lamar. In return, the available data has the potential to serve as a starting point and incentive for research on a larger scale, as the results draw attention to the likelihood of an overall rise in the inclusion of mental health as a lyrical topic in music. Moreover, it should also be noted that, even though the 2020s had the highest average of all decades, it is also the only decade included that, at the time of writing, is still ongoing. Therefore, the prevalence noted in this decade is subject to change, as the artists might continue to release music in the following years, which would potentially alter the previously calculated average.

Now that we know that the frequency of mental health references in the analyzed lyrics generally increases in line with the overall public awareness and understanding of newer generations regarding the topic, it also becomes increasingly interesting to look at the differences and commonalities between the artists and decades. When we look at the four created categories and the frequency of their presence, developments throughout the decades can once again be identified. When it comes to the variety in identified categorizations, there are certain changes to be noted. Although the variety of the mental health references does not necessarily increase with time in the same manner as the inclusion of the overarching topic does, it is still interesting to see how it has developed throughout the three discographies. In this regard, it can be said that, to a certain extent, the three analyzed artists become increasingly comfortable with approaching mental health through direct references, with the artists showing less reluctance to combine metaphorical references with direct references, as vivid descriptions become more prominent and words such as “depression” and “suicide” are more often used. Although the identified categorizations fluctuate drastically in a mostly non-chronological manner from album to album and artist to artist, it is however noteworthy that, among all three artists, the released debut studio albums and sophomore albums represent the lowest variety in mental health references. This implies that Cornell, Apple, and Lamar all showcased a certain hesitancy to tackle mental health with a clear-cut approach in the earlier stages of their career. Moreover, the range of identified categories therefore suggests that, based on the aforementioned artists, it is interpretable that musicians feel freer to speak out and describe their mental health issues when they are increasingly viewed as a solidified part of the landscape (i.e. having released multiple projects).

Within the actual details and descriptions of the lyrics, there are numerous noted differences between the artists. Cornell’s lyrics and inclusion of mental health stood out for his unique stylistic characteristics, where verses filled with cryptic wordplay and subtext

entrenched in observable and associable characteristics of planet earth (e.g. rain, clouds, sun, moon, cold, etc.) could just as easily be followed by a vivid inclination of mental damnation. Whereas the detailed descriptions of inner turmoil often allow for a clear interpretation, the cryptic lyrics, upon closer examination, often unfold like flowers do, as they reveal an evocation of metaphorical plurality; from seasonal mood changes and suicidal tendencies to addiction and loneliness.

Although in the case of Cornell the overall tone and sound of the music shared a sense of harmony with the dark and personal lyrics, Apple's discography possesses a thought-provoking juxtaposition. Whereas Apple's lyrics are often extremely personal, offering first-person recollections of emotional trauma and perceived injustices, along with the often (lyrically) underrepresented perspective of a woman battling mental health and the erroneous assumptions embedded in prejudice that come along with it, the music itself embodies a coalescence of melody, tempo and key that weaves a sense of empowerment and self-respect into the ears of the listener. In doing so, Apple flips the script, as she subverts intentions by making darkness feel bright.

Apple's lyrics are, at times, reminiscent of those uncovered in the analysis of Cornell, as she frequently refers to words that, in line with the context of the songs, serve as tropes for mental health. Think of elements such as color associations to describe a mental and emotional state or contrasting perceptions and feelings of incalcescence and frigidness. In this regard, Lamar's lyrical inclusion of mental health differs from Cornell and Apple. Whereas Cornell and Apple both lay bare their inner conflict to provide a realistic portrayal of mental health issues, told from mostly personal experiences and perspectives, Lamar encompasses an even wider range of storytelling. As mentioned in the analysis of Lamar's lyrics, he approaches the form of art as a scholastic pursuit, where the confrontational nature of his words reaches beyond the scope of one theme or topic. Lamar's lyrics lay bare social injustices and political

wrongdoings, while perpetuating elements of tolerance, respect, empathy, and progressivism in his music. The lyrics are often told through a mixture of perspectives, where Lamar speaks from his own experience growing up in violence and poverty, while recollecting stories of emotional conflict often brought on by environmental circumstances. However, these stories are not strictly told from Lamar's point of view, as many of the songs contain verses that embody the perspective of people in Lamar's tumultuous surroundings, thus providing a mixture of outlooks on the serious and long-lasting implications of systematic oppression and governmental failures. Ultimately, Lamar's utilized means of communication serves as a confrontation with ongoing social inequalities, while addressing misconceptions and illustrating the effect of systematic injustices on the human psyche.

Despite the differences in style, description, perspective, and theme, the crucial aspects of the continual growth and relevance in terms of the lyrical inclusion of mental health, along with the offered depiction and truthfulness, are in accordance with one another. Although they offer different perspectives and potentially relate to different groups and communities within society, as the stories are told from different social backgrounds and experiences, their portrayal of mental health nonetheless shares a sense of unity and realism. None of the artists offer a sugar-coated portrayal of mental health struggles, and the provided descriptions are more often than not in line with the official symptoms of a particular diagnosis. Furthermore, by relating to different groups in society due to their integration of personal affiliation, the music is able to have a profound impact on the listeners, where their utilized status as an artist (i.e. pop culture celebrity) allows them to reach the masses, thus exerting a realistic and destigmatized mental health message on a worldwide platform. With that, I am not arguing that these artists and their inclusion of mental health in lyrics will completely overhaul the public perception, stigma, and reluctance that surrounds the topic, however, I do believe that they will reach and spark the brains of those that are going to bring about meaningful change.

Nonetheless, the results and findings described in the paragraphs above do not aim to offer conclusive and definitive answers, as they rather strive to inform and showcase the magnified relevancy, urgency and importance of mental health in music. The reason why I stress the importance of this is because music is an incredibly diverse field, where cultures collide and coincide, and musical recordings have become integrated parts of history, touching the hearts of millions, if not billions, and inspiring thousands of people to pursue a musical path. With that, the United States has an enormous number of professional musicians, and an approximate estimate is extremely difficult to make due to the vastness and subjectivity of art. Furthermore, not all musicians are innovative and artistic creators impacting popular culture on a large scale (i.e. creating and recording music for a sizeable audience), as the title can imply many aspects, consisting of composers (songwriters and lyricists), performers (instrumentalists, singers, etc.), conductors, and much more. In this regard, even though the number of North American singer-songwriters who were able to penetrate popular culture and make a name for themselves between the 1980s and now, is most likely exceptionally lower than the number of professional musicians, it is still a sizable and nearly immeasurable categorization to make within the size of a master thesis. Therefore, arguing that three specific artists are entirely representative of a particular musical decade (or decades), is illogical and not at all the aim of this thesis. However, I do argue that by having analyzed the lyrics of three artists who undoubtedly had, and continue to have, an enormous musical impact, as they have all reached millions of ears, maintained decades of relevance, encompass audible and lyrical fluidity, and share a deeply rooted connection to mental health, allows for riveting and noteworthy observations that can be indicative of changes in lyrical mental health inclusion on a larger-scale.

The limitations of this thesis are largely tied to the suggestions for further research, as certain recommendations highlight both the potential of further research as well as the

limitations imposed by the allowed magnitude of the thesis, along with the possessed level of (medical) expertise and available manpower. In this regard, the limitation that is the first to come to mind has already been alluded to earlier on, and deals with the subjectivity of art. Art can elude meaning and often contains a certain ambiguity, where the meaning of a piece of work is open to interpretation. As the thesis mostly revolves around song lyrics, I am aware of the subjectivity that is involved when dissecting lines and verses of a composition, and therefore, medical sources, along with autobiographical information, available interviews and additional relevant information, has been used to justify the created classifications and interpretations. Although, by doing this, I do not claim to entirely take away the aspect of subjectivity, it does nonetheless remove a level of uncertainty and allows the interpretations to be more grounded in reason.

Furthermore, the thesis is written from the perspective of an Arts and Culture student, and although a certain sense of medical expertise has been recreated through the exploration of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, along with additional sources where needed, the interpretations and created classifications ultimately analyze how art (i.e. music) is able to exert mental health references through lyrical expression. However, the lack of medical expertise, which in the case of further research should definitely be included, translates itself into the limitations of the created coding categories and the eventual results. The coding categories were created based on the previously stated medical sources, and although this makes sense, the categories, if paired with extensive knowledge and expertise of the fields of psychology and healthcare, could have been expanded, which in result would have provided even more insights into the variety in range of lyrics and the overall development of the topic in the three analyzed discographies. Moreover, the fact that mental health metaphors are so disproportionality represented is a direct implication of the limitations brought on by the coding categories. If a verse was interpretable as a mental health reference, but did not fit the bill of

depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation, the lines were more thoroughly analyzed to see which of these three categories it would relate to most. However, oftentimes this proved to be difficult and the lines and verses ended up being ruled as a metaphor due to the inclination to avoid far-fetched interpretations without the availability of the necessary information. For example, well-formulated categories related to substance abuse, addiction, violence, or attention disorders, to name a few, could have expanded the eventual results, and would have allowed to more thoroughly see how different themes and subtopics within mental health have been addressed over the years, rather than being limited to four categories.

Although the previously addressed points can be considered as limitations, they can also be viewed as suggestions for further research, where the currently analyzed data and available information serves as a starting point for extended research into the confluence of lyrics and mental health. In this regard, the suggestion would be to expand the research, where a larger selection of artists or songs, that are predominantly selected based on the available data that helps to determine their relevance (e.g. pop charts, size of discography, streaming data, acclaim, etc.), are analyzed through a wider range of coding categories created in collaboration with medical experts. Whereas this thesis has argued in favor of the likelihood that the topical inclusion of mental health in lyrics has increased in accordance with the overall increased public acceptance and awareness, additional research, including a wider range of artists and coding categories, would provide the potential for more definitive answers, and it would be able to offer more in-depth information on the details and peculiarities of the topical inclusion in song lyrics, along with its possible social effects.

Although this thesis revolved around the exploration of lyrics, oftentimes certain audible peculiarities were highlighted, as they essentially do influence how an individual perceives the music. Therefore, in case of further research, the elements of emotion and sound, alongside the element of lyrics, should be taken into account in regard to the perspective of the listener.

Personally, I noticed the importance of sound and emotion in the expression of lyrics firsthand: Cornell's music managed to intrinsically affect and alter my own emotions and mood, whereas Apple's music at times made me feel like I could take on any insecurity that humans tend to harbor inside, while Lamar's music made me increasingly frustrated with the state of the world and managed to provoke a strong desire for change. Even though these emotions and feelings can naturally vary from person to person and can be considered as individual experiences, it is nonetheless interesting how these aspects enhance the relevance and impact of lyrics. With that, the combination of sound, lyrics, and elicited emotions, allow for even more insights into the role of music as a potential platform for change. By analyzing lyrics of the three artists and thoroughly listening to their discographies, my perception and understanding of mental health has been widened, as they all offer insights from different perspectives. Where, in mass media, mental health is often depicted in a particular way that does not highlight the underlying causes and issues that intensify a negative mental experience, the three discographies however allow for a comprehensive understanding. Whether someone is genetically susceptible to certain mental health disorders, is prone to mental health because of social and environmental circumstances, or has witnessed certain traumatic events of involuntary harm, the analyzed music allowed me to become more aware of the complexity and vastness of mental health. Although this is an extremely personal experience that I would not have grasped if it weren't for the conducted analyses, it nevertheless amplifies the power of music and the potential of lyrics and artists to broaden our understanding of mental health, while concurrently allowing us to recognize the social importance it holds.

In regard to the chosen case studies, and particularly pertaining to the topicality of Lamar's lyrics, there are several additional suggestions that would allow for theoretical and practical extensions. As mentioned multiple times, Lamar's discography carries a socially conscious aspect, where the implications of systematic failures are highlighted through

wordplay evocative of imagery. However, there are certain limitations due to the decision to exclusively analyze the studio albums within the discographies, which was done to provide consistency; making sure that the albums (and related information) were easily accessible and the workload would be doable. Although Lamar's analysis provided gripping and interesting insights, he has released multiple mixtapes earlier on in his career, even using K. Dot as an alternative stage name. In the chapter pertaining Lamar it was briefly mentioned that K. Dot encompassed the more reckless side of Kendrick Lamar, while his current name represents a more introspective and conscious voice. By analyzing both K. Dot and Kendrick Lamar's discography (which are both the same person), an even more insightful perspective in the environmental circumstances and hardships could be provided, along with the perspective of serious topics, including mental health, shared from the point of view of an adolescent (K. Dot) and adult (Kendrick Lamar).

Even though Chris Cornell and Fiona Apple do not use music as a platform for political and social change as consistently as Lamar does, they still thoroughly include a variety of important and relevant topics in their lyrics. Therefore, a detailed exploration of the three discographies, where the emphasis is extended from mental health issues to a collective of social issues, would allow for research that could provide people with a better understanding of the struggle of others, along with raising awareness on the serious repercussions of our collective failure and an introductory understanding of music as a powerful tool for social change. Ultimately, the music created by Chris Cornell, Fiona Apple, and Kendrick Lamar, embodies more than enjoyable music, as it serves an educational and social purpose, and deserves to be recognized as such.

Appendix

The 36 negative emotions as defined by the Emotion Typology

Negative emotion:	Definition:	Example of expression:
Anger	The feeling when someone did something bad that harmed or offended you.	<i>“What did you say to me?!”</i> <i>“Now you’re going to get it!”</i>
Indignation	The feeling when someone’s action goes against your moral values.	<i>“How could you do something like that?!”</i> <i>“I can’t believe he is getting away with this.”</i>
Resentment	The feeling when you are treated unfairly.	<i>“I should have gotten that...”</i> <i>“This is not fair!”</i>
Annoyance	The feeling when something is happening that bothers you.	<i>“I really don’t feel like this now.”</i> <i>“Please stop what you’re doing.”</i>
Dissatisfaction	The feeling of being unfulfilled when something happens that is different from what you expected.	<i>“This won’t stand!”</i> <i>“I want something better than this.”</i>
Frustration	The feeling when you want to achieve something, but find your action blocked.	<i>“Why doesn’t this just work?!”</i> <i>“Come on, do this for me!”</i>
Contempt	The feeling when you look down on someone.	<i>“She is such a greedy person.”</i> <i>“Those people have no manners.”</i>

Hate	The intense feeling when you think about a bad person who is doing very bad things.	<i>"He is just a horrible person." "I hope I'll never have to see her again."</i>
Disgust	The feeling when you encounter something that you don't want to get into contact with in any way, because you expect it is bad for you.	<i>"Yuck, what is this?!" "Ew, get that away from me!"</i>
Boredom	The feeling when there is nothing interesting or engaging for you to do.	<i>*yawn* "I wish this was a bit more interesting."</i>
Reluctance	The feeling when you know that you should do something that you do not feel like doing.	<i>"Do I really have to do this?" "Not now, please."</i>
Sadness	The feeling when you lost something that was important to you.	<i>"I will miss this." "I can't believe he's gone."</i>
Disappointment	The feeling when you find out that something you had hoped for has not happened.	<i>"Oh, that's too bad..." "I really hoped it was possible..."</i>
Pity	The feeling when you witness the misfortune or suffering of someone who is worse off than you.	<i>Aw, poor you!" "Look at how these people have to live, someone should do something."</i>
Loneliness	The feeling when you think there is no one who cares about you.	<i>I wish there was someone I could talk to."</i>

		<i>"Nobody cares for me."</i>
Rejection	The feeling when someone, who you want to like you, has done something that makes you think they don't like you at all.	<i>"Why didn't they call me?"</i> <i>"I wish he would know I existed."</i>
Humiliation	The feeling when someone has deliberately done something to put you down or make you look bad in the eyes of others.	<i>"Why are you doing this to me?"</i> <i>"What did I do to deserve this?"</i>
Longing	The feeling when you want something that you cannot have (now).	<i>Sigh* "I wish she would notice me."</i> <i>"If only I had the money to buy that new laptop."</i>
Envy	The feeling when something good has happened to someone else, but not to you.	<i>"Why does she have so much and I so little?"</i> <i>"Look at that house. I wish we lived there."</i>
Jealousy	The feeling when you think that a special relationship that you have with someone is threatened because a third person is trying to have a similar relationship.	<i>"Why is he looking at her like that?"</i> <i>"I don't want you to see him anymore."</i>
Guilt	The feeling when you think you have done harm to someone. You blame yourself and cannot stop thinking about this.	<i>"Oh no, what have I done to you!"</i> <i>"I'm really sorry, let me make it up to you."</i>

Regret	The feeling when you think that something you didn't want to happen could have been prevented if you had acted differently.	<i>"Oops, I shouldn't have done that."</i> <i>"Why didn't I say anything when the moment was right?"</i>
Shame	The feeling when you think that other people know something bad about you.	<i>"What will they think of me?"</i> <i>"I wish I hadn't made a fool of myself."</i>
Embarrassment	The feeling when people suddenly focus unwanted attention on you in a situation that is not in your control.	<i>"Sorry, that wasn't my intention!"</i> <i>"This is a bit awkward, but..."</i>
Fear	The feeling when you encounter or think about a thing or person that can harm you.	<i>*gulp*</i> <i>"No! Stay away from me!"</i>
Startle	The feeling when suddenly something unexpected happens, which could be something bad.	<i>*gasp!*</i> <i>"What's that?!"</i>
Worry	The feeling when something happened that could mean something bad will happen to you or someone else.	<i>"Why haven't I heard from her yet?"</i> <i>"I'm sure something bad has happened."</i>
Anxiety	The feeling when you think about bad things that could happen to you.	<i>"I have a bad feeling about this..."</i> <i>"Who... Who is there?"</i>
Distrust	The feeling when you think that someone is not truthful and does not have good intentions.	<i>"I don't believe you."</i> <i>"What are her intentions?"</i>

Doubt	The feeling when you have to do something, but there is more than one course of action to choose from.	<i>“Ehm... I think I will go for...”</i> <i>“What should I chose?”</i>
Nervousness	The feeling when you have to do something, but you think that something might go wrong that prevents you from succeeding.	<i>“I really hope this will go well!”</i> <i>“I... I’m not sure that I can do this.”</i>
Insecurity	The feeling when you are uncertain about your ability to do something or to measure up to a certain standard.	<i>“I’m nothing. I’m worthless.”</i> <i>“If I say something now, people will find out that I’m stupid.”</i>
Distress	The intense feeling when something bad is happening to you at this moment.	<i>“Help!”</i> <i>“Somebody do something!”</i>
Desperation	The feeling when you have lost almost all hope or ability to reach a goal.	<i>“Here goes nothing...”</i> <i>“You’re my last hope!”</i>
Confusion	The feeling when you get information that does not make sense to you, leaving you uncertain what to do with it.	<i>“Huh?”</i> <i>“I don’t understand...”</i>
Shock	The feeling when you realize that something very bad just happened.	<i>“How...? What...?”</i> <i>“I can’t believe it!”</i>

Source: Fokkinga, S.F., & Desmet, P.M.A. (2022). *Emotion Typology*. Delft, Delft University of Technology. <https://emotiontypology.com>

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