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The University of Southern Mississippi

THE IMPACT OF RAP MUSIC ON AUDIENCE VALUES STRUCTURE

by

Janet Mignon Kucia

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2011

## ABSTRACT

### THE IMPACT OF RAP MUSIC ON AUDIENCE VALUES STRUCTURE

by Janet Mignon Kucia

August 2011

Music has long been an integral part of culture. Identity and leisure are but two of the myriad reasons cited for music consumption. Rap music is a relatively new genre of music that has enjoyed tremendous success as a commercial and underground movement. This particular genre has become an important part of musical culture and has recently become an area of interest from an academic perspective. In this project, research in the areas of media effects and values formation is explored. Additionally, lyrical content, usage and technological implications are discussed. The author reports on original research in which the correlation between consumption of rap music and values of the consumers is explored.

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by  
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A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2011

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As this process of graduate school has unfolded, there have been many people who made it possible in various ways. My very first thanks must go to God, without whom I would not have the opportunity or ability with which to complete this project. Besides Him, there are many people I must thank, the first of which are my husband, Jerry, and our son, Jay. Jerry has read many drafts and Jay has listened to me talk about research and rap music for a long time. They have both eaten many fast food meals and endured a dining room table full of papers as I attempted to conduct and records this research. Additionally, Jenny, my niece, spent too many hours reading and making suggestions. Cindy, my sister, and our friend, Lindsey were kind enough to read through early drafts to keep me on track.

Besides family, I had a wonderful group of colleagues at Mississippi College and at USM who were kind, encouraging and interested as my work progressed. At Mississippi College, I must thank Dr. Cliff Fortenberry, Dr. Merle Ziegler, Dr. Tim Nicholas, Dr. Phyllis Seawright, Sandra Grayson, Vicki William and Dr. Judy Lewis. At USM, I wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Kim Leduff, my chair, who kept pushing me “just enough” and gave me valuable insight and guidance as I progressed. Thanks to Dr. Gene Wiggins, who tried to send me to the Air Force in 1982, for giving me one more chance to succeed in college. I am very grateful to Dr. Chris Campbell and Dr. Cheryl Jenkins for being

willing to work with and direct me. Finally, to Dr. Shin, who served on my committee, but more than that, taught me how to think and behave like a researcher.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this effort to my parents, the late Bill and Virginia Wilson. They taught me to think and to work and to be persistent. Though they were not here to see what they started, they are as much a part of this process as anyone. Thanks ya'll!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I.    INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement	
Significance of the Study	
II.   LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
Themes in the Genre	
Values	
Rap As Popular Culture	
Use and Impact of Music	
Establishing the Link	
Research Questions	
III.  METHODOLOGY .....	49
Rokeach Values Survey	
Qualitative/Focus Groups	
IV.  QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS .....	61
Summary of RVS Data	
Discussion	
V.   ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS.....	81
Focus Groups	
Survey	



VI. CONCLUSIONS.....93

- Statistically Significant Results
- Other Findings
- Why It matters
- Limitations
- Further Research

APPENDIXES.....113

REFERENCES.....118

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1.	Rokeach Values List – Terminal.....	51
2.	Rokeach Values List – Instrumental.....	52
3.	Value of Broadmindedness.....	61
4.	Value of Exciting Life.....	62
5.	Value of Pleasure.....	63
6.	Value of Imagination.....	64
7.	Value of Freedom.....	65
8.	Value of Independence.....	66
9.	Value of Obedience.....	67
10.	Value of Wisdom.....	68
11.	Value of Self-Control.....	69
12.	Focus Group Question One “This/these song(s) would get my attention if I heard it/them on the radio”.....	87
13.	Focus Group Question Two “I would feel comfortable listening to this/these song(s) with a member of the opposite sex”.....	87
14.	Focus Group Question Three “This/these song(s) make(s) me feel”.....	88

15. Focus Group Question Four “After hearing these lyrics, I feel that I  
can relate to this artist” .....88

16. Focus Group Question Five “This artist has a right to feel the way  
He does” .....88

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

“I can’t believe I said that. And kept saying it. What kind of animal would say this sort of thing?” (Jurgensen, 2010, p. 5). This recent reflection by Jay – Z regarding his song “*Big Pimpin*” illustrates a concern many people have about the lyrics found in popular rap music today.

When Oprah Winfrey speaks, people often listen. Oprah, among others, has sounded the alarm about the disturbing trends in hip hop and rap music. Oprah has been criticized by artists and fans of the genre for not being supportive. Ludacris lambasted Oprah after appearing on her show and allegedly being lectured about his music and having his comments edited (Bynoe, 2006). Ludacris, 50 Cent and Ice Cube are among those who are unhappy with Oprah’s stance on the music they play and suggest that she must have a problem with rap. Winfrey asserts that her problem is not with the genre, but with the lyrics and the way that women are portrayed in the stories told in the songs.

In her defense, Winfrey has had numerous rap artists on her show, including Kanye West, Queen Latifah and P-Diddy, to name a few. Though Winfrey has a huge audience and wields much influence, she has chosen to take a stand on this issue in spite of much criticism from that significant audience. In response to the criticism, Oprah states “I respect other people’s right to do whatever they want to do in music and art. . . I don’t want to be marginalized by music or any other form of art...I am opposed to being marginalized as a woman”

(Bynoe, 2006, p. 5).

While Oprah has issues primarily with the mysigony so prevelent in rap music, there are numerous other themes which are just as unsettling. Violence and drug/alcohol abuse share space with lyrics which celebrate resistance to authority, denegrate the traditional family structure, and tout the virtues of hyper-sexuality.

With these themes so much a part of this popular musical culture/genre, one may wonder if these issues are represented in society, in general. Some evidence of this presence is presented in the following paragraphs. Government statistics from 2009 show that one in three female teens in the United States will become pregnant at least once before age 20 (Focus, 2009). Close to 2,800 teen females become pregnant each day. Rape is cited as a factor in more than half of sexual experiences for women under fifteen. Young men over the age of twelve accounted for 32,130 rapes or attempted rapes in 1995.

Gang presence in schools nearly doubled between 1989 and 1995, increasing from around 15% to 28%. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for young adults 15-24 years old (Soundvision, 2009). Drug and alcohol abuse are on the rise for the first time in a decade. Marijuana and alcohol use is up to 38% and 39%, respectively for ninth to twelfth-grade students (Guarino, 2010). These statistics, along with other evidence, suggest that many of the young adults of today are severely lacking in their moral development and the development of pro social values and behaviors (Brown, 2006).

While this is a relatively new genre of music, considerable study has been

conducted in an effort to understand the impact of this phenomenon. One of these was a study by the *American Journal of Public Health*. In 2003, they surveyed 522 African American girls in Birmingham, Alabama. The authors found that the more rap music (consumed by way of videos) young women watched, the more likely they were to have perpetrated violence against teachers, contracted a sexually-transmitted disease, drunk alcohol and taken drugs, or to have been arrested. Another study by the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Berkeley, CA, found a pattern of increased alcohol abuse and commission of violent acts among young people who listen to rap (Focus, 2009).

As time progresses, many young people are becoming more socially isolated, as their reliance on mass media and technology, music in particular, increases. Additionally, there appears to be less need felt for human interaction, the sort of which guides and influences the development of behavior (Adler & Proctor, 2007). This isolation is partially a result of technological advances enjoyed in the last quarter-century. Young people rely on technology in the form of computer mediated communication (CMC) to meet many of their social needs which, historically, have been met through face to face (FTF) interaction. While CMC has a useful role in today's society, Adler and Proctor in the text *Looking Out Looking In* (2007), suggest that reliance on CMC may cause a false sense of involvement when it is used as a substitute for interpersonal FTF interaction.

While interpersonal content among friends and family can be relayed via technological means, many of the nonverbal elements are lost in texts, email,

tweets, voice mail and blogs. As suggested by the social presence theory (Wood & Smith, 2005), the fewer the number and varied types of cues contained in a message (the bandwidth) the lower the quality of the communication in terms of sharing warmth, support and friendliness. This supports the idea that the lack of physical presence, in which more nonverbal cues can be added to a message, will compromise the quality of the shared connection among individuals. While CMC can certainly increase the quantity of communication possible between individuals, it is not necessarily communication of great quality that is shared.

Others argue that media use allows consumers to escape from the trials of daily life, or that the consumers of mass media are amusing themselves to death (Postman, 1985). In fact, Barna (2007) a leading media researcher found that the amount of time spent on mass media had increased to more than nine hours a day. Barna (2007) also reported that the typical teen in America absorbs almost 60 hours of media content a week. While all of this time is divided among various forms of media such as television, the Internet, etc., some research indicates that for young adults, a large portion of this time is spent consuming music. Barna (2007) suggests that the problem with this amount of consumption, in part, is that it is unfiltered, unchaperoned consumption.

Additionally, Barna (2007) found that by the age of 23, the average American will have been exposed, via mass media, to over 30,000 acts of violence, among them murder, rape, and other types of assault. By the same age, the average American will have viewed thousands of hours of pornographic material (Barna, 2007). Could the consumption of this type of content be linked to

a diminished view of the value and dignity of human life? Could the content of the music that is consumed (the specifics of which will be explored later in the paper), foster hatred, disrespect for authority and women, violence and selfishness? These are some of the questions which will be explored in this study.

The primary purpose of this study is to begin to explore the link between the type and content of music to which a young adult exposes himself or herself and the values held by these individuals, as compared to those who consume other types of music. The author is particularly interested in whether there is a significant impact on the values of men and women consumers of rap in the following areas: *Broadmindedness, Exciting Life, Happiness, Imagination, Freedom, Independence, Obedience, Wisdom and Self-Control.*

There has been much discussion about the difference between rap and hip hop. Andrew Leech (2008) who compiled a bibliographic essay devoted to the understanding of the hip-hop culture and rap music found that many people are confused about the difference between rap and hip-hop. He asserts that while there are some people who believe that the terms can be used interchangeably, this is not the case. For the purpose of this study, the author relied on the definitions supplied by Leech (2008). According to his definitions:

hip-hop is a cultural movement that emerged in the South Bronx in New York City during the 1970s, and MCing (or rapping; MC-master of ceremonies, also mic controller) is one of its four primary elements. Hip-hop's other three



essential elements are generally considered to be graffiti art (or aerosol art), breaking (or break dancing, b-boying), and DJing (or turntablism; DJ-disc jockey), though some maintain that beat-boxing, fashion, and language are also included among hip-hop's elements. Rap music has become by far the most celebrated expression of hip-hop culture, largely as a result of its being the easiest to market to a mass audience. (Leech, 2008, p.10)

### Making the Connection

While a direct cause-effect relationship is impossible to establish, there is, as the literature and anecdotal evidence suggest, definitely a relationship between the music to which an individual is exposed and the values held by the individual. Not only are values affected, there is an apparent link between emotions felt and expressed as different types of music are consumed.

The question of whether popular music provides a way to investigate society has been argued for years. In *Popular Music Perspectives*, Lee Cooper (1991) suggests that the popular music of a given time provides a legitimate resource through which one can study contemporary culture. With that in mind, in this study the author will explore whether popular music, specifically rap, affects the values of those consuming the contents of this genre.

Is the type of music consumed really an issue? Research suggests that the music consumed by young people will help to define them as they listen to the music and use lyrical interpretation to define who they are in terms of their

social and individual identities (Vannini, 2004). Vannini argues that “the discourse of popular music is neither a mirror of the existing *zeitgeist* nor an original creation, but rather a reality that is socially constructed by the interplay among mainstream mores and values, consumption practices and subjective interpretation of its meaning by its audiences” (p. 2).

Vannini and Myers (2005) argue that the main function of music is to develop a sense of identity, to interpret information about love and leisure and interpersonal relationships and is “characterized by a thematic content describing love as a ‘lack’ while emphasizing the importance of a lifestyle of leisurely consumption” (p. 20). Two prevalent themes in the rap genre are identity and conspicuous consumption.

There appears to be a link between music and psychology. There is evidence to support that link and this evidence will be explored later in this paper. The link between music and the psychology of the listener, combined with the prevalence of music in the lives of teens and young adults, leads to the belief that an attempt should be made to determine if there is, indeed, a significant relationship between the type of music consumed by individuals and in the emotions felt and values expressed by these consumers.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies regarding media effects have run the gamut, from claiming direct and powerful effects to those which argue that media effects are more limited, but there is little question that there is some sort of impact created by the media on the receiver (Griffin, 1994). Of interest in this study is whether the consumption of a particular type of media, specifically rap music, might have an impact on the values of the consumer.

With that in mind, in the following pages, current findings regarding some of these issues will be discussed. The first section includes an overview of themes in the music, current literature on values and value formation. The next section will explore the effects of music and consumption patterns followed by a review of some of the reasons that people listen to music. Following that, the author will explore rap as a genre, a brief historical sketch, some of the major influences and finally, potential effects. Lastly, the author will attempt to establish a tentative linkage among the various pieces of information presented.

#### Themes in the Genre

##### *Resistance to Authority*

The concern among many parents and other interested individuals is not the beat or the style of rap music, but, instead, the content or lyrics. In the following paragraphs, some of the most prominent themes will be discussed. The language used by rap artists has been the subject of much writing and study. The resistance to both authority and commercial

interests is evident in the lyrics from the song by Chamillionaire entitled “Hip Hop Police” :

Officer I didn't do it, you can't blame me for this Could you please  
Loosen up the handcuffs on my wrists? You can call me what you  
wanna but mayne I ain't a snitch No cooperation is exactly what  
you will get Til I talk to my lawyer, you get no reply (You've  
obviously been watching too much CSI I'm not a crash dummy so  
don't even try To talk your dirty trash to me, no BFI If you are not  
guilty of anything, then why did you run?) Cause you the police and  
plus I saw you cocking your gun And the chamber wasn't empty, it  
was obviously one (If you think I'm believing that one, your  
obviously dumb) Huh? (I know that you heard the sirens, you dived  
in To the vehicle you was driving and ridin And you shouldn't be  
whining about abidin By the law, nah it's obvious your lying) With so  
much drama in the industry Hip Hop Police are listening Be careful  
or you'll be history Looks like another unsolved mystery It's murda,  
murda, murda Ah it's murda, murda, murda Yeah it's murda.

(LyricsKeeper, 2007)

Another chilling example of the of rap lyrics that showcase resistance involves Rodney Ray Howard. The eighteen-year-old was charged with the killing of a patrolman who stopped him while he was listening to Tupac’s “2pacolypse Now” which has inflammatory lyrics. According to Howard, the lyrics “made him have a fight back attitude instead of a stay away attitude when stopped for a

missing headlight. Howard was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death” (Dottinga, 2006, p. 3).

Olson and Shobe (2008) cite NWA's *Straight Outta Compton* as an album that provides a good sample of the lyrics relating to life and race relations in the impoverished Los Angeles area community:

One of the album's most prominent (and infamous) songs, “Fuck tha Police,” is set in a mock trial format with Dr. Dre serving as the judge and the police playing the role of the defendant. The song offers a scathing critique of police treatment of young Black men. NWA references the use of mace and billy-clubs, unwarranted vehicle searches, and the use of lethal force on the part of the police. The group also is extremely critical of African American police officers, who are believed to have betrayed their race. In the end, the police are found guilty. (p.1000)

"By the Time I Get to Arizona" by Public Enemy depicts Black revolutionaries in Arizona protesting the banning of the Martin Luther King Day holiday and shows them assaulting White politicians and attempting to spark revolution. The song "Shut it Down" calls for shutting down of the system of exploitation and oppression (Best & Kellner, 1999). These are but a few examples of the lack of respect and trust of authority evident in the lyrics of some rap music.

### *Gender/Sex*

Gender is described by social scientists, as a learned and cultural construct (Adler & Proctor, 2007). Gender includes those attributes associated

with a certain sex by the group or culture of which the person is a part. These groups include family, religion, friends, school, and especially media. Bandura and Bussey (1999) discuss gender from the social cognitive theory of gender differentiation:

In this theoretical perspective, gender roles and conceptions are the product of a broad network of social influences operating independently in a variety of societal subsystems. Human evolution provides bodily structures and biological potentialities that permit a range of possibilities rather than dictate a fixed type of gender differentiation. (p. 676)

Hartman (2006) reported that women are often repelled by media with a violent content and that women are portrayed so often in a negative light that many females are hesitant to consume that media. Additionally, the reference to appearance is unsettling to many women in a society plagued with poor body images, negative self-concepts, and low self-esteem.

A study conducted by Motivational Educational Entertainment in 2004 found that the attitudes held by many youths, both men and women, regarding women mirrored those attitudes and values prominent in rap music. This study was a nine-city study dealing with sexuality in the lives of poor African American teens between 16 and 20 years of age. Their findings were shocking. The ideas of empowerment and feminism were absent in the replies of the young women. According to Bynoe (2006), the most telling of the attitudes was a disdain for Black women by both Black men and women. According to Thulani Davis (2004),

the study includes labels for both sexes: “Dog, homeboy, playa, lame, sugar daddy, and payload” are the terms for males while women are saddled with much more disrespectful monikers: “Block bender, woo-wop, skeezer, ‘hood rat,’ ho, all mean promiscuous female...freak, bitch, gold digger, hoochie mama, runner, flipper, shorty and . . .wifey” (p. 5). What the authors of the study found disturbing was that the females were likely to use the same terminology to describe themselves as were the men.

The attitudes about women go much further than just the descriptors. They also involve ideas about the importance of being faithful. The authors found that the young men had the idea that there are women to use (shorty) and women to date (wifey), but none who merit long term commitment. The role in which a woman finds herself is determined by her history as well as her size and features (Davis, 2004). While the young men in the study reported a largely disrespectful attitude about women, it is equally disturbing to consider the findings regarding women toward each other. The women reported that they did not value themselves or other Black women, nor did they feel they could trust other Black women. Interestingly, one of the behaviors reported was an increase in lesbian relationships among the women in the study. It is suggested that these relationships grow from the frustration of being devalued by the men in their world (Bynoe, 2006). These attitudes certainly are present in the song lyrics of popular rap music. While there is no way to prove a cause-effect relationship between listening to rap music and holding these ideas, these examples provide more opportunities to study potential effects.

Further, current representations of gender and sexuality in rap music are problematic because they “exploit a heterosexist and misogynistic masculinity and passive, objectified and overly-sexualized femininity” (Sachs, 2007, p. 10).

To give a further illustration of gender issues, Winfield and Davidson (1999) offer the following analysis. 2-Live Crew’s album “As Nasty as They Wanna Be” is eighty minutes long and uses the word “fuck” 226 times, has 87 references to oral sex and one mention of incest. In the album, women are referred to as “bitches” and “whores” 163 times (Winfield & Davidson, 1999).

Another example of degrading lyrics show up in the song “Chickenhead” by Three Six Mafia:

...now these chickenhead hoes see this platinum thick as White gold,  
 a flock of broads follow me from the club to break they knees knowin  
 that’s all i want straight out tha club, ...i’m tha playa who got u  
 chickenheads knockin at my door tellin me that you diggin me, tellin  
 me i’m yo man to be girlfriend its gone cost a fee, get yo rags and  
 work that streets, pay ya boy and make me rich so we keep them  
 swisher’s lit.” (LyricsKeeper, 2010)

### *Violence*

A 2002 study of 1,056 students aged 15-25 asked students about their music-listening habits and also asked whether they'd recently been involved in any violent behavior, such as getting into fights or attacking other people (Dontinga, 2006). As Dontinga (2006) hypothesized, the study confirmed a strong and significant association between listening to certain types of music and



engaging in antisocial activities. Dontinga (2006) found that listening to music with violent lyrics can cause at least a temporary increase in aggressive thoughts and feelings, though the long-term effects are not known.

An example of a popular song with disturbing lyrics is by Insane Clown Posse's "Murder Rap":

Wakin up with blood on my hands and I don't know why you  
motherfuckers tryin to get in my path. Don't be surprised when you  
get a shotgun up your ass. Instigators, I got one for that ass too.  
I'm gonna hang you from a street light, mangled and blue (eww).  
You on my shit like a fiend coke But if you say the wrong thing i'll  
put a slit in your throat. (Lyrics007, 2007)

### *Drugs*

In a 2005 study by The University of Pittsburg School of Medicine, Dr. Brian Primack studied the lyrics of popular music. His team's findings supported the idea that the popular music of today is filled with references to substance abuse and that this abuse is shown in a positive light (Dunham, 2008).

The study was based on the lyrics of the top songs of 2005. Of the rap songs in the study, 77% contained references to alcohol and drug abuse, mostly associated with partying and having a good time. Dunham (2008) cites an example in the song "Stay Fly," in which rappers Three 6 Mafia say: "Breakin down the good weed, rollin' the blunt/Ghetto pimp tight girls say I'm the man ... Let's get high ... smoke us one" (p. 3).

In "Candy Rap," *50-Cent* shares more lyrics regarding the use of drugs and a

dangerous lifestyle:

You think You got drugs but Your "crack" was left on the table, Smoke it Ja, Go on inhale, All I need is a gun to fuckin make bail, Yayo's comin home soon, better beware, It's G-Unit man guns will do better than cut your hair. Think u swallow X huh, what does it look like? Mr.Gangsta thinks he needs to smoke to be gangsta, u aint cook right? Vita, u bia, your rhymes are pretty whack And Irv you're not Suge stop tryin to deal crack." (Dunham, 2008, p. 3)

As demonstrated in the preceding examples, there are a number of antisocial themes found in the rap genre. The consumption of this type of music and lyrics may have a negative impact on the values of consumers and subsequently, affect the behaviors of consumers, leading to more antisocial activities.

### Values

"Values" is a word that can be used in various contexts. In the following paragraphs, the author will explore the construct of values as the term is used by scholars in the field. Bilsky and Schwartz (1994) define values as "relatively stable individual preferences that reflect socialization" (p.164). While there is much discussion in the current literature about how to define values, Bilsky and Schwartz (1987) took a different approach and looked at the common features of values. "Values (a) are concepts or beliefs, (b) are about desirable end states or behaviours, (c) transcend specific situation, (d) guide selection of evaluation of behaviour and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance" (Schwartz &

Bilsky, 1987, p. 552). Gross (1985) argues that ideology and values of the culture are linked and suggests that they cannot be separated. Gross identifies one of the social functions of values: they serve to integrate or merge of ideas and systems into a collective representation of society. They also bring to bear social control and serve as a motivating factor for individual action or collective societal action (Durkheim, 1961).

Another approach to values was presented by Roland Barth (1966). Barth's view suggests that within any given culture, a common, well-established set of values is present. These values are in a constant state of evolution due to the fact that members of the culture are continuously accessing the values as they relate to life. As a result, changes in values occur along with changes in society. Barth summed up this process in the following:

Through repeated transactions, I would argue that these aspects (values) are reinforced, and that the values applying to those prestations which flow between parties become systematized and shared. They become systematized because, when, and only when, we are faced with the repeated necessity of choice, are we forced to resolve dilemmas and make some kind of comparison between, and evaluation of, the alternative with which we are presented. They become shared, or institutionalized, because in groping for a solution to the dilemmas, we prefer to use other people's experiences as our guide rather than risk the errors implied in a trial-and-error procedure. Thus we adopt the principle of evaluation, and collectively grope towards a consistency of values.

(p.50)

In *Messages, Meanings and Culture: Approaches to Communication Criticism*, Sillars' (1991) offered a six-pronged approach to human values. The first of the six is the Puritan-pioneer system. This values system includes the valuation of hard work, frugality and selflessness while discouraging frivolous activities. Further the Puritan-pioneer value system is linked to the myth of "individualism" and the idea that even as individuals, members of society must take into consideration the needs of other members of the group. Individuals are encouraged to work hard, but to be aware of their limitations and be prepared to fail at times (Sillars, 1991).

The Enlightenment system is the second values system identified by Sillars (1991). In this system, the collective thoughts of society take second place in importance to individuality and rational thought. This Enlightenment system tends to support a nationalists' ideology.

The third values system suggested by Sillars (1991) is the Progressive Values system which is directly linked back to the Enlightenment Value system, but which supports the use of rational thought to help society move forward. Terms used to describe this value system include "change," "future" and "modernity." While this values system is not widely heralded, it is very popular in western cultures.

The fourth values system identified by Sillars (1991) was also an offshoot of the Enlightenment Values system – this is the Transcendental system which emphasizes individual intuition and other ways, besides individual reason, to

develop knowledge. Younger individuals are drawn to this system which promotes a return to truth, natural simplicity, and sensitivity to other humans.

The fifth system is the Personal Success Values system and tends to focus on individual and personal values and the happiness he or she will feel based on what they can gain. Finally, the sixth system – the Collectivistic Values system - tends to place the importance of the community over the interests and needs of individuals within the group. This values system is seen as positive (Sillars, 1991) as it helps to control greed within society.

Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgewick, in *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts* (2002), assert that values, in the simplest explanation, represent something of worth that is placed within a hierarchical system by the individual and society. The authors identify three levels of value within cultural theory: aesthetic, economic and moral. Values which are considered aesthetic are those which deal with goods or activities produced by society. The amount of worth ascribed to those goods and services such as art and cultural artifacts will serve as a benchmark of aesthetic value.

Edgar and Sedgewick (2002) refer to economic value which “centers upon explanation of the value and price ascribed to commodities” (p. 432). Two views exist regarding this level of value: the Orthodox system which associates economic value with the demands of the consumer and the ability of the producer to meet the demand. On the other hand is the Marxist view which holds that the economic value is determined by the amount of labor and costs associated with the production of the commodity.

Finally, the authors posit the idea of moral values upon which this particular study will be based. Edgar and Sedgewick cite Durkheim's collective conscious (1962) as the foundation for the study of moral values. This idea is that members of a society must adhere to certain values held in high regard by the society as a whole. When members of society agree with and adhere to these values, integration and stability can exist (Edgar & Sedgewick, 2002).

Richard Kilby (1993) offers a simple definition for values in *The Study of Human Value*, stating that values are the conception of what is desired, what is considered to be good in a society when compared to that which members consider to be wrong or bad. Kilby suggested twenty-eight types of values. Of these, most are common and individuals are only consciously aware of a few of these. Primary among these are moral values which are very personal in nature and serve as a way to control members of a group or society. These values emerge out of members' need to live together and to cooperate within established groups. Members of groups pass along the values to the next generation who take them on and are shaped in ways that are conducive to group effectiveness and harmony (Kilby, 1993). While these values and effects may exist and work on a subconscious level, they exert a powerful influence on individuals' lives.

In this view, there are essential and nonessential, but desirable values. Essential values, according to Kilby (1993) include respect for authority, truthfulness, self-reliance, control of sexual urges, property ownership, care of the elderly and taking care of oneself. It is suggested that these values are

universal and will exist, at some level, in almost every society.

Nonessential values as suggested by Kilby (1993) are those values which are not necessary for life but are desirable. He cites as examples of these types of values the Seven Deadly Sins – wrath, covetousness, gluttony, sloth, lust, envy and pride. While these may not damage the culture as a whole, they can certainly cause damage on a personal level, and therefore, are to be eschewed.

Of particular interest for this study is Kilby's (1993) work on values as they relate to human behavior and how culture shapes and moderates this behavior. The integration of values helps members of society set a hierarchy of importance against which behaviors will be judged or perceived by the other members of the group. On a personal level, as well as on a societal level, values affect behavior. Values supply a standard, a system upon which to base decisions, a way to tell right from wrong and provide a sense of purpose and stability in individuals' lives.

Values are our standards for living: they guide our conduct, lead us to take a particular position on a specific social issue, predispose us to favor one or another political ideology.

They are the standards we use to judge things, to praise or blame ourselves or others. They are the principles that tell us what is worth arguing about, or worth trying to influence. But most important, values enable us to rationalize our own attitudes and actions— which might otherwise be socially unacceptable—so that we may always feel morally in the right, or at least keep our self-respect intact. An unkind remark made to a friend, for example,

may be rationalized on the ground that it is "just being honest"; an inhibited sex life may be rationalized as self-control; an aggressor nation can be self-righteous if its actions are justified in the name of national security, self-defense or the preservation of *Freedom*. (Rokeach, 1970, p. 39)

The link between values and human behavior is obvious. Some will argue that there is moral decay and a decline in values in today's culture. Rokeach (1973) observed that values do not decay, but that they do ebb and flow in the importance we place on them. People do begin to hate certain things; they just come to a point where they do not place as much relative importance on that certain thing as they once may have done. "We never prefer dishonesty to honesty; we merely elevate other ways of behaving, such as being ambitious or loyal, in importance relative to honesty. With this in mind, we can learn (through research) the present value priorities of a population and learn the processes through which people's value priorities change" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 139).

Values considered to be desirable are termed prosocial values. All of the values in the Rokeach Values Survey are considered prosocial or desirable. For the sake of clarity, the following definitions are offered for these values: "prosocial behavior is voluntary behavior intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998, p. 702) and Arsenio and Lover define prosocial as "acting in the best interests of others, e.g., caring, helping, protecting others and so on" (1995, p. 87).



## Rap As Popular Culture

### *The Genre*

Negus (1996) suggests that genres can be considered social categories because the names, standards, and inclusive qualities of genres in the music industry have been representative of the society from which these genres emerged. It is safe to say these genres are shaping the music industry in the same way the music industry is shaping them, in other words, supply is shaping demand (Negus, 1996). Myer and Kleck assert the following in reference to genres: “Music genres are formally codified into specific organizational departments’ narrow assumptions about markets and targeted promotional practices and this is strategically managed by entertainment companies” (as cited in Negus, 1996, p. 28).

Finally, a more general definition of a musical genre is offered. A *genre* is a category of an art form. The word is used to describe subsets of literature, films, television shows, and music that fit certain criteria. Often a work will fit into one genre, but it is possible for a work to have multiple genres. The term *music genre* is used to refer to a variety of facets of music, including the period during which a musical composition was written, its style, its instrumentation and treatment of those instruments, its form and function, its means of transmission, its means of dissemination, and the location of its geographical origins sometimes crossed with the cultural or ethnic background of the composer (Elizabeth, 2009).

An effort to understand the rap genre is, at best, difficult. Much information

is available, but, as it is a relatively new genre, the research is limited in its usefulness in looking at trends (Watkins, 2005). What is obvious from a reading of relevant articles and academic publications is that rap is an ever-growing genre which captured the ears and minds of a large segment of America's youth in the late 1970s and early 1990s. The popularity of rap as a genre has continued to grow and to spread as other demographic groups, besides Black men, have become producers and consumers. Mickel and Mickel (2002) reported that between seventh and twelfth grade, students will consume 10,500 hours of rap and rock music, almost as many hours as they will spend in the classroom. This is likely higher now that music is even more available than ever in the past.

#### *Historical View*

November 11, 1973 is the birthday of Hip Hop, the lifestyle that birthed the rap genre. According to Yvonne Bynoe's *Encyclopedia of Rap and Hip Hop Culture* (2006), that is the date that the Zulu Nation was formed by Afrika Bambaataa, ushering in a new way of life that would change the cultural landscape in America. According to Bynoe (2006), the Zulu Nation was formed to encourage use of the arts in an effort to lessen street violence and rivalries in the streets. Gangs became crews who fought with turntables, lyrics and dance as opposed to guns and knives.

Rap's history can be traced back to the early days of blues, through rock and roll's early days, through the punk invasion to where it is now - a dominant form of music - and resistance. The following section will explore the evolution of rap music along with some of the language of resistance as it is found in rap

music. Authenticity or 'being real' and living the life experience about which the artist sings is a major consideration in the rap genre and will be addressed.

Keith Negus in *Popular Music Theory* (1996) traced the evolution of rap music. According to Negus, rap music is one element of a broader culture - hip hop. These two terms are often used interchangeably, but are not the same. Rap is the music and hip hop is the lifestyle. Rap was created in the late 1970s, by African American youth in New York inner city areas (Bynoe, 2006) and was a very local phenomenon in the beginning. The music drew from Caribbean, Jamaican, Puerto Rican and African music styles as well as jazz and the blues. These were incorporated into the electronic synthesized sounds of the disco era. It involved an exchange across the Atlantic where each coast contributed some of the elements of what is now known as rap. Some of the techniques of rap include scratching, using turntables, mixers and drum machines to create the beats to which the rhyme is then set. For the purpose of exploring the historical element, the history of the elements of the Hip Hop lifestyle will be addressed briefly in the following section. A more detailed explanation of the practices as defined by Sachs (2007) will be presented in a later section.

According to Bynoe (2006), the lyrical element of rap stems from African *griots*. These are said to be the first rap artists who passed down the history and shared the culture by telling stories of kings and queens and regular people in the form of praise poems.

Moving forward, in the 1940s, Black radio DJs, such as Dr. Hepcat of Austin and Al "The Midnight Gambler" of Chicago along with Douglas "Jocko"

Henderson of New York, became popular. These men used verbal magic to tell stories and are considered instrumental in the development of what is now known as rap. Another connection the Jamician roots of rap is DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) who is considered the father of Hip Hop. Herc was known for his use of toasts and raps along with mixing breakbeats on two turntables. His work with breakbeats ushered in the B-boys, who became a primary part of the Hip Hop lifestyle.

B-Boys got their start in the Bronx and were very neighborhood-specific, each area had its own local stars. As B-boying became more popular, the practice moved from the Bronx to other areas of New York, including Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn.

Along with the lyrics and the dance, turntable expertise is a part of the larger lifestyle. The use of scratching and sampling using dual turntables was a skill set that was valued and allowed the DJ to signify and showcase his abilities. Sampling is the use of prerecorded music to create a new sound and was (is) part of the criticism regarding the originality of some rap music. This use of other materials led to numerous lawsuits and is also part of the claim made by some scholars that rap is a postmodern form of expression.

In addition to the lyrics, dance and use of turntables, graffiti was another part of the early days of Hip Hop. While the other three elements began in New York, Bynoe (2006) states that graffiti was started in the early 1970s in Philadelphia. Some of the first known taggers were Cornbread and Cool Earl who wrote wherever they could in Philadelphia and became well known as their

writings were reported by Black news organizations. This practice moved to New York where subways became a favorite canvas. These writings were designed, according to Bynoe (2006) to get citizens to pay attention to those who were marginalized.

Moving forward to 1979, the Sugar Hill Gang released “Rapper’s Delight” and changed the reach of rap from local to international. “Rapper’s Delight” was the only major hit by the Sugar Hill Gang, but it served the purpose of increasing the popularity of rap music and spreading awareness of the genre out of the inner city neighborhoods in which it has flourished. Also in 1979, Kurtis Blow’s single “Christmas Rappin’” was the first rap record to be released by a major record label. This deal helped to set Def Jam Record producers up for success as a major player in the rap recording industry. Some of the acts represented by Def Jam included Run DMC and LL Cool J.

Rap's audience started to grow tremendously and gain notoriety with acts like Public Enemy, N.W.A., and Ice-T. The history of rap music cannot be addressed, even superficially, without a mention of the East/West Coast rivalry of the late 1990s characterized by “dissing” from both camps which escalated to dangerous levels. Some (Bynoe, 2006) suggest that the conflict was the reason behind the murder of Tupac Shakur in 1996 and the 1997 murder of The Notorious B.I. G. While the history of rap is important, it is the current state of popularity and consumption with which the author is concerned. Rap developed into and remains a vital force in American culture. It is no longer exclusive to the Black community, but has moved into many areas of American life, crossing most

demographic boundaries.

### *Producers*

In an attempt to explain the culture of hip hop and the genre of rap, Aaron Sachs (2007) explained that there are four key practices (as previously discussed) or elements: Graffiti, B-boying (break dancing), DJing, and MCing (rapping). There was an eventual convergence of these elements. DJing and MCing are often combined to refer to what is called for the purpose of this paper “rap” music. Some of the elements can be further broken down. For instance, rap itself will likely showcase African American oral traditions such as “toasting,” which is a style of lyrical chanting in which a deejay talks over a rhythm, and “signifying,” which is the act “of rendering powerless through language an uncompromising oppressor. . .the ability to talk with great innuendo, to carp, cajole, needle, and lie; the propensity to talk around a subject; making fun of a person or situation; and speaking with the hands and eyes” (Carter, 2006, p. 1) and b-boying (breakdancing), which highlights the martial arts and the break-beat.

Rap was formed out of specific condition in New York’s Bronx area. While the rap movement began on the 1970s, it exploded in the 1980s and became massively popular. The 1980s was a harsh time for Blacks. Living conditions in the ghetto area, which were already bad, worsened as the economic landscape shifted. Welfare programs were cut, job opportunities for inner city Blacks declined and living conditions deteriorated, while crime, violence, AIDS and drug use grew. It was a desperate time for inner city dwellers (Best & Kellner, 1999).

This genre grew out of a sense of oppression and defiant rebellion against a society that seemed to forget the marginalized inner city dwellers.

According to Negus (1996), it was formed because of the experience of urban segregation. Although rap was formed in the ghetto and often viewed as “Black music,” and most accounts show hip-hop as an almost exclusively African American movement (Sachs, 2007) it was (and is) not produced only by Black producers or consumed by only Black audiences. There have been efforts in recent years to show hip-hop as belonging equally to Hispanics, and Puerto Ricans specifically. Also, several scholars give credit to Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the United States (Rose, 1994). White and Latin artists also participated in the production of the music, and rap has crossed ethnic boundaries to be enjoyed by all races (Negus, 1996).

The authenticity of an artist is of vital importance to the rap community. Careers have been destroyed when there was a disclosure that the artist had been less than “real” with the audience. Mickey Hess, in *Metal Faces, Rap Masks: Identity and Resistance in Hip Hop's Personal Acts* (2005), says that the “performance of authenticity is necessary to establishing credibility as artist within hip hop which values a discourse of lived experience and has roots in the oral traditions of testimony and bearing witness. . . a successful performance of hip hop's authenticity is one which positions the artist as an experienced ‘knower’.” (p. 1)

Olson and Shobe (2008) suggest that Coolio is a good example of the importance of authenticity and the value of having lived the experience about

which an artist sings. Coolio grew up in Compton, California, a poor inner-city, which makes his sentiments in “Gangsta Paradise” ring true to listeners. As it is, the consumer can relate to Coolio’s past drug addiction and his experience with gangs and death. So, when he “raps about being 23 and not really knowing if he will ever see the age of 24, it is easy for the listener to believe that he knows what he is talking about. In many ways he has walk(ed) through the valley of the shadow of death (the reference to Psalm 23 that “Gangsta’s Paradise” opens with), so he understands what it is really like (Olson & Shobe, 2008, p. 1001).

Snoop Doggy Dogg provides another example of the value of the lived experience. Olson and Shobe (2008) cite the situation in the 1990s when Snoop was at the height of his career and had just released the album *Doggystyle* which included the song “Murder was the Case.” Snoop was arrested and tried for a gang murder, but was able to fit in a performance on MTV Music Awards. Snoop was acquitted; his arrest for murder along with jail time for selling marijuana enhanced his reputation as a gangsta.

### *Consumers*

While rap began as “Black music,” and in the minds of some, remains Black music, the patterns of consumption belie that idea. In fact, conventional wisdom suggests the 70% of rap consumers are White males. Rose (1994), on the other hand, suggests that the numbers may be disproportionate because the numbers are based on sales. These estimates do not take into account bootleg copies of music and the pass-along rate of some of the music. Rose suggests that the pass along rate may be 11-15 albums/CDs for every one purchase.



Additionally, it is suggested that much of the music is passed along online and is never commercially available. So, while the argument may be supported theoretically, the real numbers for consumers of rap based on demographics likely are quite different.

Other results for the years 1995, 1999 and 2001, for both adults 18 to 34 and for all adults, suggests that the percentage of recent rap buyers who are White was about 70% to 75% for all three years (Bailik, 2005). An attempt to track down reliable data on specific demographics proved fruitless. The 70% percent young White male audience idea is, as previously stated, supported to a degree, other useful information is difficult to uncover. The VoiceAmerica (2010) stations claim that 97% of their Hip Hop listeners are between the ages of 12 and 34 and 58% male with 62% making less than \$40,000 per year.

Herbert Gans (1972) discusses the idea of “appropriation,” a process by which White upper class members of society appropriate the culture created by the lower classes. After the appropriation has taken place, some of the elements of the culture are changed to make a better fit for the new consumer – the upper class. Gans (1972) further suggested that country and jazz are both examples of this process of music that began as expressions of poverty and despair, but were appropriated and adjusted for the use of the upper class. On that same note, David Roediger (1999) asserts that White minstrels were brazen in their theft of Black music, but stole the music and claimed to be a “student of the Negro . . . and authentic performers” (p. 117). Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley are more recent examples of this type of appropriation by the upper class.

Olson and Shobe provide an overview of the economic reality of this appropriation:

In 1996 alone . . . rap music brought in \$800 million dollars to the recording industry, up from \$600 million in 1990 . . . Large record companies profit immensely from rappers. In an interview. . .Dr. Dre discussed his new protégé, Eminem's race, and suggested that Eminem being White was actually kind of a plus, because it would allow him to grab that alternative market. Furthermore, White rappers who have 'made it' reap tremendous amounts of money from their commercial success. This appropriation of African American musical forms by White artists appears to be so well known in the music business that Eminem can even joke about it by comparing himself to Elvis Presley and rapping that he will use Black music to get wealthy in "Without Me." (2008, p. 1001)

### *Context*

The term "rap" will often evoke diverse responses. While there are various subgenres (addressed in another section of this work), there are some general thoughts which represent two diverse schools of thought. The work of some authors, such as Michael Eric Dyson's (2008) provides an apologetic approach suggesting that rap is only reflecting the poverty and violence of inner-city life. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner stated this view well in *Rap, Black Rage and Racial Difference* (1999):

At its best, rap is a powerful indictment of racism, oppression, and

violence that calls our attention to the crisis of the inner cities and vividly describes the plight of African-Americans. Rap provides a positive valorization of Blackness, celebrating Black culture, pride, intelligence, strength, style, and creativity. It supplies a voice for a social group excluded from mainstream communication and enables members of other social groups to better understand the experiences, anger, and positions within the Black community. . . It is a potential wake-up call urging African-American and other audiences to break out of the cycle of drugs and violence, accept self-responsibility, and begin to restore their lives and communities in whatever ways possible as they struggle for broader societal changes. (p. 7)

The other view of rap is that it is abhorrent and offers no redeeming value. One major problem is the subgenre "Gangsta" rap which enhances the negative stereotypes that Black men are thugs. It depicts young Black men as being interested in only in violence, sex, drugs, money, and material things. Black women, on the other hand, are portrayed as money-hungry sex objects. Rap has drawn criticism from numerous groups, including the American Academy of Pediatrics. In a policy statement from 2009, the Academy stated that:

In some cases lyrics communicate potentially harmful health messages. Such lyrics are of special concern in today's environment, which poses unprecedented threats to the health and well-being of adolescents. Pregnancy, drug use, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (and other sexually transmitted diseases), injuries, homicide, and suicide have all become part of the landscape of everyday life for many American teens. (p. 1219)

The record industry would like very much to excuse itself from any blame by arguing that they are only providing what consumers demand: murder, rampant sex and humiliation, ignorance, racially stereotypical behavior and attitudes. By promoting the gangsta lifestyle, recording companies may affect attitudes, behaviors and possibly even values. Best and Keller (1999) stated

They are making a vehicle that is part of the problem rather than the solution. Many of its images and models are highly problematic, such as the gangsta rap celebration of the outlaw, pimp, hedonistic pleasure seeker, and drug dealer. (p. 7)

The idea that rap reflects the reality of inner city life is partly true, but it is more than a simple reflection and it could be placed in another light, as a modeling agent for consumers. The social cognitive theory suggests that behavior is copied based on modeled behavior that is salient, prevalent and simple (Bandura, 1977). The argument could be made that some of the violence and misogyny present in the community of consumers is, at least partly, a result of attitudes and behaviors that have been glorified in rap and persistently presented as entertainment. This is not to discount the suffering endured by many in the Black community. It is just to offer an alternative view. The reality is there is truth to both arguments, but the fact remains that rap is prevalent in the lives of teen (and adults) and the potential is there for some sort of effect on the consumer. Therefore the genre deserves significant study and attention.

## Use and Impact of Music

### *Technology*

The sale of MP3 players, Smart phones and other personal technological devices for capturing and listening to music has skyrocketed. It is difficult to find a young adult without an MP3 or another listening device close to their hand or plugged in to their ear. The music is ever-present and private. Americans are more and more dependent on new digital technologies for entertainment, content, information and stimulation. What is different, though, between older and younger consumers is the relationship that exists between the commodity (music) and the consumer.

The relationship that exists between older adults (Baby Boomers) and technological products is this: that older adults tend to use technology for information and convenience (Tucker, 2009). Younger adults, on the other hand, rely on technology to facilitate their search for meaning and connection (Barna, 2009). Teens also depend on technology to relate to one another and to build social networks (Tucker, 2009). Further, Tucker (2009) reports that 80% of teens said that they were bored, sad, uninformed and grumpy after a day without technology. These technologies have begun to rewire the ways in which people - especially the young - meet, express themselves, use content and stay connected. According to Tucker (2009), not only is technology important to teens, it has become “essential to the average American teenager’s social life” (p. 16). Young people think of themselves as creators of content, not only consumers of it. According to Barna (2009), technology gives young people a voice.

Technology is creating a new opportunity for influence. The music invites a sharing relationship between the music and the listener. Brog (1995) calls these associations "projective identification" (p.40). Music, in the way it is put together to include both the instrumentation and lyrics may provide "intra psychic defensive constellations. . .a peaceful melody may repeatedly cover over an underlying disturbing musical rhythm, creating . . . defensive suppression" (Brog, 2005, p. 2).

Ratcliffe (1983) attempted to understand the link between the music to which one listened and the emotions felt, as well as the behavior exhibited by the consumer of a particular type of music. He used the idea that a certain type of music or even a set of chords is likely tied back to a positive experience the listener may associate with that particular music. On the other hand, Radcliffe (1983) suggests that negative associations are likely made as well. Like the positive connections, the negative associations may be so deeply buried that the significance is forgotten - it simply evokes a strong response. It is this response - the negative - which has concerned authorities for many years. What will cause music to have a huge negative impact on some listeners and no obvious effect on others?

The reactions one experiences may be closely tied to the idea of "emotional memory" in which an individual may experience a strong emotional response to a person, smell, or space without any idea why they have a response (Adler & Proctor, 2007). Early emotional memories ". . .are salient and are templates that exert a continuing effect on adult behavior, even though such

memories may never be retrieved. The memory of early emotionally salient interactions continues to exert its effect despite the fact that these experiences cannot be remembered” (Modell, 2005, p. 557).

The author will not argue a direct cause-effect relationship between the music an individual consumes and his values and/or behavior. While there appears to be a connection, it is a loose association which cannot be empirically demonstrated. The more likely cause of any change in behavior or values is that this change is in response to a certain stimuli (the type of music) and prior conditioning. Radcliffe (1983) argues that, because of this conditioning, suggestions of violence and disrespect of women, pictures of rappers, and publicized disrespect shown by rap icons may cause associations that result in very strong feelings.

On the other hand, the need to feel accepted is tremendous for teens and young adults. This acceptance may be tied, in their minds, to a certain type of music - even as background. This stimulus would likely cause two responses: a) a strong positive association to a certain type of music; and b) a strong (perceived) need to participate therein (Adorno, 1973).

Another suggestion regarding the psychological/behavioral impact involves subliminal stimulation. Research in the 1950s showed a connection between subliminal messages to “eat popcorn” and “drink Coca Cola” and the emotional responses (Radcliffe, 1983). Is it possible, then, that the subliminal messages included as background music to which one is exposed and does not consciously attend, may have the most genuine effect on listeners.

There is a strong assumption that there is a link between music and psychology and there is evidence to support that link (Cooper, 1991). That link, combined with the prevalence of music in the lives of young adults leads to the belief that an attempt should be made to determine if there is, indeed, a significant relationship between the amount of music consumed, the types of music consumed and the values reported and expressed by the consumers.

While the enjoyment of music is, by no means, a negative behavior in and of itself, the potential effects of the music on the values exhibited by the consumer should be considered. According to Aday and Austin (2000), song lyrics "provide a uniquely potent means of arriving at basic attitudes thoughts and feelings" (p. 5). Music lyrics deal with real problems faced by America and its population. The fact that music plays an important role in society has been well documented. In 1970, Russell reported that music is often overlooked as a source of information regarding human values, but that the lyrics provide a rich area for exploration. This leads one to the conclusion that popular music may provide bountiful information and valuable insight into American culture. Additional work by Gritzner (1978) that attempts to understand the lyrics of popular music may provide information about societal values.

As noted by Cooper (1991), popular music, commercial rap music here, provides a lens through which to observe society. Additionally, rap music is a medium that seeks to attract the largest possible audience (Sickel, 2005) and has become *commodified* as artists look more toward record sales than searching their souls.



In considering the response that consumers of specific media types may have, Jensen (1991), in *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*, summarizes the work of various researchers this way “audiences are characterized not simply by socioeconomic background variables, but simultaneously by their discursive modes of interpreting cultural forms, which give rise to different constructions of social reality” (p. 29).

### *Effects*

Author Margaret Isom (1998) discusses Albert Bandura’s Social learning theory as it can be related to media effects. Bandura believed that people do not inherit violent tendencies, but instead model them based on behaviors that they experience either in person or through the media. According to Bandura, individuals often receive rewards (increased self-esteem, financial gain, praise or tension reduction) as a result of the negative behaviors and, therefore, these mimicked behaviors are reinforced. Based on Bandura’s Theory, It seems evident that a cycle of consumption, aggression and reward is at work in today’s society.

In a recent article, Brown (2006) captured the concern many educators, parents and concerned adults feel about the prevalence and the impact of rap music on young people today. He summarizes:

Adolescents' attitudes about school, material success, appreciation of themselves and others seem to be shaped to a large extent by the music they listen to. Similarly youths' behavior, as reflected in their clothing styles, language usage, desire for jewelry, and

automobile preferences, have been attributed to lyrics and videos from hip-hop. Beyonce sings *Crazy in Love* and her video has teens (and Oprah) dancing the "Beyonce," Lloyd Banks' *I'm So Fly* reminds listeners of his appreciation for material possessions, Mannie Fresh raps (the act of saying rhymes to the actual beat of the music) that everything should be *Real Big* and children want to wear big clothing and jewelry, and want to drive big cars. Whenever the Franchise Boys sing about bangin' in White Tees there is a sudden surge in sales of White tee-shirts. (Brown, 2006, p. 54)

### *Mood Adjustment*

Another interesting approach to the study of the impact of popular music is that of mood adjustment. Knobloch (2003) suggests that people attempt to adjust their mood to fit upcoming social situations and that of the music selected to set the specific moods is indicative of larger implications. Knobloch, Westerwick and Alter (2006) suggest that the type of music chosen may help create a mindset necessary to deal with certain social situations such as driving in rush hour traffic, taking an exam or maintaining an angry mood. Further, Erber, Wegner and Therriault (1996) found that people do select media as a method of mood adjustment or maintaining or acquiring a certain affective state.

### Establishing the Link

Does what is consumed have an impact on the values and behavior of

those who hear the lyrics? Based on the previously-cited research, there appears to be a strong connection. The next logical question, then, is what is it about consuming this type of material that might affect one's values? Are there antisocial impulses always lying dormant, waiting for something to set them off? It has been well established (Atkinson, 1999) that media violence makes children behave more aggressively. There is no way to empirically show the effects of media violence may have or may not have caused real-world violence, but there is definitely a relationship, a 'priming' or 'cuing' of behavior for certain individuals. Atkinson (1999) explains it as follows:

The reasons are well understood in psychology: even as toddlers, if we see another kid push and hit to get what they want, we imitate, we begin to learn scripts for that behavior. In addition there have been studies: you show the images of gore to young children, they have a universal negative reaction: their heartbeat goes up, their palms sweat, and so on. You show it to them again and again, and those indications go away. They adapt, they become desensitized. (p. 58)

Do the effects mentioned above transfer to consumers of other types of media, specifically rap music? A review of the relevant literature regarding values, media and behavior has not revealed a clear connection between consumption of rap music and certain values as suggested for this study. There is, however, a strong connection suggested between values and behavior (Chernoff & Davison, 1999; Mercier & Kohn, 1977), between consumption of specific music types and behavior (Lim, Hellard, Hocking, & Aitken, 2008) and

the increased presence of lyrics which seem to glorify drug use (Herd, 2008), dangerous sexual behavior (Chernoff & Davison, 1999), negative views of women (Soto, 2009) and violence (Dontinga, 2006).

Posner and Schmidt (1992) focused on how values make a difference in the way that people feel about themselves. They suggest that it is imperative that values are understood because they influence choices people make, the things to which they respond, the way they spend their time, in fact, they assert that values form the very core of one's personality (Posner and Schmidt, 1992). Although values are abstract constructs, they play a significant role in the selection of external stimuli, and perhaps more importantly, the interpretation of that stimuli. The key link between values and behavior is the way one interprets behavior is influenced by values and that perception plays a role in linking values to the behavior choices made by consumers (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). According to Williams (1979) the "value system could be seen as an explanation for particular affective and behavioral outcomes, for it forms the cognitive structure that supports the affective and behavioral domains" (p. 40).

### Research Questions

Having presented the previous information on values, rap music consumption and content, and the demonstrated connection between various media and behavior, it is the author's desire to determine if a similar connection between consumption of rap music and the values reported by the consumer. The author will conduct a static group comparison between members of a group that self-report being consumers of primarily rap music with participants making

up the group that self-reports primary consumption of music from genres other than rap.

Other research has focused on behaviors and values. An overview of these studies provided a starting place for the current study. Brown (2006) and Chernoff and Davidson (1999) reported a correlation between certain behaviors and the values structure held by the individual or group members who performed these behaviors. For purposes of this study, those clusters of values will be used to guide the inquiry and suggest potential value clusters.

When dealing with some the themes associated with rap music (i.e., use of illicit drugs, misogyny, violence, risky sexual behavior and excessive use of alcohol), there are a number of possible user values which might be inferred from the analysis of literature on these themes. As cited previously, casual sex is a recurring theme in rap music. Chernoff and Davison (1999) in their study of values and risky sexual behavior, identified a pattern of values related to this behavior. They include an *Exciting Life*, *Freedom*, *Broadminded* and *Independent*. Found to be of lesser importance were *Self-Control*, *Responsibility*, and *Obedience*.

Other prominent themes in rap music (as previously noted) include use of illegal drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. Chernoff and Davison (1999) also identified values related to unhealthy behavior, such as smoking, alcoholism and excessive drinking as well as illegal drug use. They found that for individuals who participate in these behaviors, the importance given to an *Exciting Life*, *Broadminded*, *Happiness* were higher than for non-participants. Values that were

deemed less important to participants as opposed to non-participants included *Self Discipline* and *Wisdom*. Mercer and Kohn (1977) report that user of marijuana place *Broadmindedness*, *Imagination* and *Independence* higher than non-users and that they would likely place *Obedience* lower in the hierarchy than non-users.

Based on the previously-cited findings for values related to excessive alcohol use, illicit drug use and casual sex, the following inferences may be made about the participants in these behaviors. The participants will place a relatively high value on: *Broadminded*, an *Exciting Life*, *Happiness*, *Imagination*, *Freedom* and *Independent* and a relatively low value on: *Obedience*, *Wisdom* and *Self-Control*.

In an effort to provide a clear understanding of the values as used by Rokeach (1973), a definition will be provided for each of the nine values to be explored. These definitions are based on information from Rokeach (1973) and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2008).

- *Broadminded* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “open-minded” (p. 35) and by Merriam-Webster as “tolerant of varied views; inclined to condone minor departures from conventional behavior” (n.p.).
- *Exciting Life* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “a stimulating, active life” (p. 40) and by Merriam-Webster as “to call to activity; to rouse to an emotional response; to arouse (as a strong emotional response) by appropriate stimuli” (n.p.).

- *Pleasure* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “an enjoyable, leisurely life” (p. 55), while Merriam-Webster defines *pleasure* as “a state of gratification, sensual gratification, frivolous amusement or a source of delight or joy” (n.p.).
- *Imagination* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “daring and creative” (p. 44) and by Merriam-Webster as “the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality” (n.p.).
- *Freedom* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “independence and free choice” (p.42) and by Merriam-Webster as “the quality or state of being free, the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action, liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another, the quality of being frank, open, or outspoken, improper familiarity, boldness of conception or execution, unrestricted use” (n.p.).
- *Independence* is defined as “self-reliant and self-sufficient” by Rokeach (1973, p. 43) and by Merriam-Webster as “not subject to control by others, not affiliated with a larger controlling unit, not requiring or relying on something else, as not looking to others for one's opinions or for guidance in conduct, not requiring or relying on others, being enough to free one from the necessity of working for a living, showing a desire for Freedom” (n.p.).

- *Obedience* is defined as “dutiful and respectful” by Rokeach (1973, p. 44) and by Merriam-Webster as “submissive to the restraint or command of authority or willing to obey” (n.p.).
- *Wisdom* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “a mature understanding of life” (p. 44) and by Merriam-Webster as “accumulated philosophic or scientific learning, the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships, good sense, generally accepted belief, a wise attitude, belief, or course of action” (n.p.).
- *Self-Control* is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “restrained or disciplined” (p.43) and by Merriam-Webster as “restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires” (n.p.).

The literature review did not reveal a value cluster related to misogyny, resistance to authority and violence. Based on the research findings related to the themes of drug use and risky sexual behavior, one might expect to find a similar cluster of values as related to other behaviors such as involvement in violent behavior, unhealthy relationships, resistance to authority, excessive drinking and sexual promiscuity. As these are all themes in the rap genre, the inference may be made that these values associated with certain behaviors would be reflected in the values of consumers of music which is based on, and laced with, messages relating to these themes. Since there is no research to support these correlations in a consumer's values hierarchy and their media consumption, this research will attempt to address the following questions:

RQ 1: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance



for the value of *Broadmindedness* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 2: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of an *Exciting Life* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 3: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Happiness* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 4: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Imagination* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 5: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Freedom* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 6: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Independence* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 7: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Obedience* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 8: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Wisdom* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

RQ 9: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Self-Control* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Due to the nature of the research questions, a single type of inquiry is not sufficient. A two-part study was conducted which utilized a survey to gather quantitative data from music consumers (see Appendix A and Appendix B). Additionally, a series of focus group sessions were conducted to gather more in-depth, qualitative data in attempt to more fully understand the issues and to provide insight into other areas of future inquiry. In addition to the discussion regarding the songs chosen, a demographic questionnaire was administered (see Appendix C).

In an effort to measure values and address Research Questions 1-9, the Rokeach Values Survey (RVS) was employed. A Mann-Whitney U was run to determine if there was a relationship between the type of music consumed and the values held by the consumers, and if so the direction and extent of the relationship. To do this, a static group comparison was employed to determine if there is an association between values and music consumption. The treatment group consisted of consumers of rap music and the control group consisted of the consumers of other genres combined. Additionally, to gain a more realistic picture, the same analysis was run using the consumers of the other genres (Christian, country, pop/rock and soul/blues) as the treatment group.

#### Rokeach Values Survey

“Values may be defined as enduring prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that a specific mode of conduct (instrumental value) or end state of existence

(terminal value) is preferred to another mode of conduct or end state” (Rokeach, 1973, p.140). Values are at the hub of an individual's personality and “values have been shown to be significantly related to many attitudes and behaviors” (Rokeach, 1973, p.140). Rokeach's approach to the study of values has been productively employed in populations of widely diverse ages, ethnic backgrounds, and education levels. Given the opportunity, people can identify their values and entertain arguments about the implications of their values. People can change their value priorities to reflect their goals, and they can change their behavior to conform to their values. These values are arranged in a hierarchical order in terms of their relative importance at a given time (Rokeach, 1973).

Rokeach (1968) identified 36 core values (see Table 1) and Williams (1970) found these have not changed appreciably in the intervening years. More recent research by Bearden, Netemeyer and Mobley (1993) analyzed values of Americans from 1962 to 1990 and found that there were 30 values which were prominent. In an effort to be parsimonious, the author will use the well-established group of values suggested by Rokeach (1973). Not only do these values offer a wide view of the scope of values, they provide the basis for numerous studies of the sort the author wishes to undertake.

Rokeach claimed that the ultimate function of values is to provide direction to members of a group as they seek to satisfy their needs (1968). Using these values, Rokeach claimed, will allow members to seek to fulfill their goals while maintaining positive self esteem and maintaining positive regard by other

members of the group.

According to Rokeach (1979) values can be placed in two categories: terminal and instrumental. Terminal values are those values that relate to “beliefs or conceptions about ultimate goals or desirable end-states of existence that are worth striving for” (p. 48). Stated differently, terminal values produce an ideal state. Instrumental values, on the other hand, are those “beliefs or conceptions about desirable modes of behavior that are instrumental to the attainment of desirable end-states” (p. 48). As opposed to terminal values which produce an ideal state, these instrumental values suggest socially acceptable ways of behaving.

The Rokeach Values Survey (RVS) was developed after much research on values. This questionnaire measures specific values or belief systems and incorporates 36 different values thought to be present in most societies. Following is a list of these values divided into terminal and instrumental categories (See Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1

*Rokeach Values List - Terminal*

Type/Name of Value	Description
A Comfortable Life	a prosperous life
Equality	brotherhood/equal opportunity for all
An Exciting Life	a stimulating, active life
Family Security	taking care of loved ones
Freedom	independence and free choice
Health	physical and mental well-being
Inner Harmony	Freedom from inner conflict
Mature Love	sexual and spiritual intimacy
National Security	protection from attack
Pleasure	an enjoyable, leisurely life
Salvation	saved; eternal life
Self-Respect	self-esteem
A Sense of Accomplishment	a lasting contribution
Social Recognition	respect and admiration
True Friendship	close companionship
Wisdom	a mature understanding of life
A World at Peace	a world free of war and conflict
A World of Beauty	beauty of nature and the arts

(Rokeach, 1973, pp. 62-63)

Table 2  
*Rokeach Values List - Instrumental*

Type/Name of Value	Description
Ambitious	hardworking and aspiring
Broad-minded	open-minded
Capable	competent, effective
Clean	neat and tidy
Courageous	standing up for your beliefs
Forgiving	willing to pardon others
Helpful	working for the welfare of others
Honest	sincere and truthful
Imaginative	daring and creative
Independent	self-reliant; self-sufficient
Intellectual	intelligent and reflective
Logical	consistent; rational
Loving	affectionate and tender
Loyal	faithful to friends or the group
Obedient	dutiful; respectful
Polite	courteous and well-mannered
Responsible	dependable and reliable
Self-controlled	restrained; self-disciplined

(Rokeach, 1973, pp. 62-63)

### *Subjects*

The surveys (Appendix A and Appendix B) were conducted at a community college in the Southeastern United States. The survey was administered in an introductory level, required class, and the author collected 250 surveys, 31 of which were not complete and, therefore, not used. The author gained access to the classrooms through the department chair, who encouraged her teachers to cooperate. Some of the students were offered extra credit, but this was at the discretion of the individual teacher. The student sample represents a convenience sample and therefore, this is not a random sample, which will limit application. Participants included 79 Black females, 44 White females, 51 Black males and 35 White males. Of the eleven who chose "other" for race, four were female, and seven were male. These were all classified as freshmen and sophomores.

Prior to the main survey, a pilot study was conducted using a smaller group of 18 students. These students were enrolled in an undergraduate class at a small private college in the southeastern part of the United States. They volunteered to participate, but were given extra credit as well. This group identified some issues that were confusing, and based on these findings, subtle adjustments were made to the instructions as well as to the demographic and music preference areas.

### *Procedure*

The researcher gained access to the students at a small junior college in the southeastern part of the United States because of previous relationships



there with an administrator. The administrator asked for teachers under her direction to volunteer for inclusion in the survey. Once the teachers agreed, the author made arrangements to attend classes and administer the survey at the beginning of class. The sample used represented a convenience sample since there was no attempt to achieve a random sample.

Upon entering the class, the survey was explained by the author and a small amount of information was shared about the study. The consent form was distributed, read, signed and taken up. The students were then given the paper survey and instructed to address the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS), (Table 1 and Table 2) first. This is a simple two-part scale that has proved to be a reliable measure of values. This RVS is discussed more fully in the previous section in values. In previous research, it was found that the RVS regularly gives distinctively different value profiles for various groups and group members (Rokeach, 1973).

Part One of the RVS includes 18 goals or terminal values such as a comfortable life and a world at peace, and the subjects were asked to arrange them in order of their importance to the student him or herself. The second part of the RVS includes 18 instrumental values such as *Ambitious* and *Broadminded*, which are used to meet terminal goals. The students were asked to hierarchically arrange these, as well.

After the RVS surveys were administered and the incorrectly completed or incomplete surveys were removed, 219 useful surveys remained. The data for all of the RVS scales and the demographic/preference surveys were entered into

the SPSS program for analysis. While there are 36 values included in the RVS, for this study, nine were chosen to explore further. The author chose to limit the number of values due to time and financial constraints. The nine chosen (*Broadminded, Exciting Life, Happiness, Imagination, Freedom, Independence, Obedience, Wisdom, and Self-Control*) were selected because they reflect themes and concepts present in the music selected to investigate. The data from the remaining values provide a rich area for future exploration.

The second part of process of data collection was the administration of a survey on which participants were asked to indicate music genre preferences (see Appendix B). The participants were asked to self-report on their music consumption based on forced-choice questions regarding specific genres using a pencil and paper instrument. The choices were rap, pop/rock, country, Christian and blues/soul. Students were asked to rank from one to five their music preferences in addition to answering questions about consumption. Additionally, students were asked to sign up with contact information if they were willing to participate in a focus group in the near future.

For the purposes of this study, Peter Larsen's (1991) definition of "genre" from *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies or Mass Communication Research* edited by Jensen and Jankowski (1991) was used:

a system of aesthetic or textual conventions. In the semiological terminology, however, a genre may be studied as a latent *lanugue* governing the production of individual works. Further, in a Levi-Straussian perspective, genre may be regarded as a 'mythical'

structure serving to interpret social conflict to the audience in ritual or symbolic terms. Specifically, genres may hence be said to function 'ideologically' in the sense that they produce and reinforce beliefs of how social reality is (and should be) structured. (p. 129)

### *Statistical Procedure*

After the RVS was completed, the mean rank for each of the 36 values in the list was calculated, and the data garnered from the RVS and the music preference/demographic survey were tabulated. The means for each of the chosen values for each of the groups (based on music preferences), were analyzed and compared to the means of the values reported by the other groups, combined. For instance, for the value of *Broadmindedness*, the mean value for the group of individuals who listed rap as their primary music preference was compared to the mean rank for the value of *Broadmindedness* as reported by the other groups combined, including those individuals who reported listening to country, blues/soul, Christian and rock/pop. The differences found between the mean scores for these values were analyzed for significance.

In order to test for statistical significance between the rankings found for each value and their mean value, the Mann-Whitney U was used. "This test is the nonparametric substitute for the equal-variance *t*-test when the assumption of normality is not valid. When in doubt about normality, it is safer to use this test.

Two fundamental assumptions of this test are:

- The distributions are at least ordinal in nature.
- The distributions are identical, except for location. This means that ties are

not acceptable.

This particular test is based on ranks and has good properties (asymptotic relative efficiency) for symmetric distributions. The Mann-Whitney test statistic,  $U$ , is defined as the total number of times a  $Y$  precedes an  $X$  in the configuration of combined samples. It is directly related to the sum of ranks” (Walker and Kratcoski, 1985, p. 4).

### Qualitative Research/Focus Groups

#### *Focus Groups*

The use of a focus group in this project was appropriate because of the sensitive nature of some of the subject matter. While individuals may be open to a one-on-one discussion of their views on violence, they may be more reticent in terms of self-disclosure in areas such as sex, drugs and the value of life. According to Greenbaum (2000), one of the strengths of focus groups as a research tool is that there is security in numbers. This technique enables individuals the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in a non-threatening, group atmosphere. Edmunds (1999) defines a focus group as a format which brings together eight to ten qualified individual in a face-to-face situation to discuss a given topic. Further, Edmunds (1999) suggests that a group larger than ten may become unwieldy and hard to control.

Focus groups have become popular in research, generally in the social sciences and specifically in the area of communication research. This is in part due to the fact that much of communication research is qualitative. Focus groups have grown in popularity over the last thirty years (Krueger & Casey, 2000) and

are seen as useful tools for eliciting information that may not be anticipated.

### *Participants*

A group of between eight and ten people is considered ideal for a focus group (Greenbaum, 2000; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Morgan, 1993). Further, Edmunds (1999) suggests that at least two focus groups should be conducted for best results. As a result of these recommendations, the author used students from a small liberal arts college in the southeastern part of the United States to conduct four focus groups of between three and twelve people each. In an effort to gain a broad understanding and to allow the groups to function optimally, the author chose to conduct homogeneous focus groups. The four groups included: one Black female group, one White female group, one Black male group and one White male group. The students were chosen based on their willingness to participate as noted on the written surveys, and were given extra credit in a Communication class.

The students were separated by sex and race and put in individual classrooms. They were assigned a moderator who had previously received training for leading the group. The chairs were arranged in such a way that all participants could see and hear each other. The session started with the moderator reading the consent form and having participants sign a copy. After this paperwork was done, the moderator explained the process which included listening to clips of popular songs and responding to each song both verbally and by using a Likert scale questionnaire. Participants were also advised that the discussion would be audio recorded. The moderator would play the clip of the

song, ask participants to complete the survey and then open the floor to comment.

This procedure was followed for the three clips chosen.

### *Questions*

The prompt questions for the focus groups were developed based on the literature review and designed to address common themes present in some of the more popular music in the genre. These questions were similar to the research questions for the study, but more focused on specific themes identified in the surveys.

CHAPTER IV  
QUANTATIVE RESULTS  
Summary of RVS Data

The pen and paper survey was administered to 250 students. Of these surveys, 219 were completed and used in the analysis. The results of the RVS and the demographic/music preference questionnaire were tabulated and tested for significant differences using the Mann-Whitney U test for non-parametric data. A determination was made as to whether the consumers of rap music reported a different level of importance for certain values than did consumers of other types of music.

The first research question was:

RQ 1: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Broadmindedness* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' rating for the value of *Broadmindedness* was not significantly different ( $M = 110.22$ ) than the rating for this value given by consumers of other music types combined ( $M = 109.93$ ),  $U = 4387.50$ ,  $p = .977$ . While not statistically significant, there appears to be a slight difference in the importance of the value between the two groups, with rap consumers ranking the value as less important than the other group. The test also indicated that those who reported listening to Christian and country music ranked *Broadmindedness* as less important than did the other groups, though the differences were not found to be statistically significant. As is

noted in Table 3, consumers of soul/blues and rock/pop ranked *Broadmindedness* as more important than did the other groups, though, again, the difference was not statistically significant. The difference in means was more pronounced in all of the other groups than it was in the rap consumer group, although some ranked it as more important and some ranked it as less important.

Table 3

<i>Value of Broadmindedness</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	110.22	118.54	116.40	98.05	105.03
Other Groups (Mean)	109.93	107.21	108.94	111.97	111.51
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	4387.500	3994.00	2715.500	2543.500	4030.500
Asymp. Sig.	.977	.253	.543	.256	.521

The second research question was:

RQ 2: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Exciting Life* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers rated the value of an *Exciting Life* as significantly greater ( $M = 98.37$ ) than did the other music preference groups combined ( $M = 116.78$ ),  $U = 3273.00$ ,  $p = .005$ .

While only the rap group's ranking for an *Exciting Life* was significantly different than the other groups, the other consumer groups did reflect some



differences which are noted in Table 4. Consumers of soul/blues ranked this value as more important than did other groups, while the rock/pop, Christian and country consumer groups ranked an *Exciting Life* as less important than did the other groups.

Table 4

<i>Value of an Exciting Life</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	88.75	121.96	121.03	103.03	115.76
Other Groups (Mean)	116.78	106.08	108.18	111.15	108.25
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	3273.000	3809.000	2572.000	2698.000	3990.00
Asymp. Sig.	.005	.109	.294	.507	.457

The third research question was:

RQ 3: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Pleasure* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers rated the value of *Pleasure* as significantly greater ( $M = 88.02$ ) than did the other music preference groups combined ( $M = 117.02$ ),  $U = 3234.00$ ,  $p = .004$ .

The consumers who reported listening to Christian, country and rock/pop placed a lower value on *Pleasure* than did the other groups. On the other hand, as seen in Table 5, consumers of soul/blues, like the consumers of rap, placed a higher value on *Pleasure*, though the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 5

<i>Value of Pleasure</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	88.02	127.07	111.42	104.39	116.63
Other Groups (Mean)	117.02	Na	Na	Na	Na
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	3234.000	533.000	2870.000	2740.000	3946.000
Asymp. Sig.	.004	.022	.893	.593	.392

The fourth research question was:

RQ 4: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Imagination* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' rating of the value of *Imagination* was not significantly different ( $M = 108.33$ ) than was the ranking of other music preference groups combined ( $110.53 = 4$ ),  $U = 4310.50$ ,  $p = .824$ .

Though the differences were not found to be statistically significant, the differences are worth noting. Consumers of rap, soul/blues and rock/pop music ranked *Imagination* as more important than did all groups combined. The consumers of country and Christian music ranked *Imagination* as less important than did the other consumers groups, as noted in Table 6.

Table 6

<i>Value of Imagination</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	108.33	119.08	120.03	105.71	97.98
Other Groups (Mean)	110.53	107.33	108.35	110.71	113.65
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	4310.500	3964.500	2603.000	2781.000	3671.000
Asymp. Sig.	.824	.220	.336	.681	.118

The fifth research question was:

RQ 5: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of Freedom than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' ranking of the value of *Freedom* was not significantly different ( $M = 98.37$ ) than was the ranking of other music preference groups combined ( $M = 113.71$ ),  $U = 3782.50$ ,  $p = .124$ .

While there were not any statistically significant differences on the rankings by different groups, there were some differences noted. As seen in Table 8, consumers of rap and country placed a higher value of *Freedom* than did the other groups while consumers of Christian, soul/blues and rock/pop music ranked the value of *Freedom* as less important than did the other groups combined.

Table 7

<i>Value of Freedom</i>	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	98.37	115.47	103.35	122.85	112.91
Other Groups (Mean)	113.71	108.21	111.10	107.88	109.12
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	3782.500	4159.500	2708.000	2515.500	4135.500
Asymp. Sig.	.124	.463	.893	.221	.707

The sixth research question was:

RQ 6: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of Independence than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' rating of the value of *Independence* was not significantly different than ( $M = 94.45$ ) than the ranking for the other music preference groups combined ( $M = 114.96$ ),  $U = 3575.00$ ,  $p = .040$ .

The ratings varied, but for rap, country, soul/blues and rock/pop the ranking for this value was ranked as more important than all groups combined, as is shown in Table 8. Interestingly, the only statistically significant finding for this value was in the rankings of consumers of Christian music, who ranked *Independence* as less important ( $M = 133.43$ ) than did all other groups combined ( $M = 102.33$ ),  $U = 3190.00$ ,  $p = .002$ .

Table 8

<i>Value of Independence</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	94.45	133.43	103.95	109.13	107.61
Other Groups (Mean)	114.96	102.33	1110.00	110.14	110.73
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	3575.000	3190.000	22726.500	2887.000	4162.000
Asymp. Sig.	.040	.002	.565	.934	.758

The seventh research question was:

RQ 7: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Obedience* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' rating for the value of *Obedience* was not different to a statistically significant degree ( $M = 112.60$ ) from the ranking by other music preference groups combined ( $M = 109.17$ ),  $U = 4261.00$ ,  $p = .731$ .

While there were differences in the rankings by other consumer groups, only one group's ranking was different from the other group means to a statistically significant degree. Consumers of Christian music reported a much higher level of importance ( $M = 75.74$ ) for the value of *obedience* than did the other groups combined ( $M = 121.21$ ),  $U = 2605.00$ ,  $p = <.001$ . As seen in Table 9, when comparing the consumer groups of the other genres, rap, soul/blues

and rock/pop all ranked *Obedience* as less important than did the combined groups.

Table 9

<i>Value of Obedience</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	112.60	75.74	119.40	113.85	133.49
Other Groups (Mean)	109.17	121.21	108.45	109.36	102.87
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	4261.000	2605.000	2622.500	2794.500	3086.000
Asymp. Sig.	.731	<.001	.372	.714	.002

The eighth research question was:

RQ 8: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of *Wisdom* than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' rating of *Wisdom* was not different to a statistically significant degree ( $M = 111.33$ ) than was the ranking for the other music preference groups combined ( $M = 109.58$ ),  $U = 4328.500$ ,  $p = .860$ .

Differences were found in the group's rankings, and although they were not statistically significant, they are worth noting. Consumers of rap and country music ranked *Wisdom* as less important than did the other groups while Christian, soul/blues and rock/pop ranked *Wisdom* as more important than the other groups combined, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

<i>Value of Wisdom</i>					
	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	111.33	104.62	130.08	98.87	109.84
Other Groups (Mean)	109.58	111.76	106.69	111.84	110.05
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	4328.500	4164.500	2291.500	2569.000	4276.000
Asymp. Sig.	.860	.471	.056	.290	.984

The ninth research question was:

RQ 9: Do consumers of rap music identify a different level of importance for the value of Self-Control than do individuals who do not consume rap music as their primary genre?

A Mann-Whitney test indicated that self-proclaimed rap consumers' rating for the value of *Self-Control* ( $M = 126.26$ ) was lower than the ranking by other groups ( $M = 104.81$ ) to a statistically significant degree  $U = 3537.00$ ,  $p = .031$ . Conversely, consumers of country music consumers ranked *Self-Control* ( $M = 84.52$ ) as having a much higher level of importance than did other groups combined ( $M = 114.20$ ), to reflect a statistically significant difference,  $U = 21.24$ ,  $p = .015$ .

While not statistically significant, other differences found in the data are noted in Table 11. Consumers of Christian and rock/pop ranked *Self-Control* higher than did the other combined groups, while consumers of soul/blues placed a lower ranking on *Self-Control*.

Table 11

*Value of Self-Control*

	Rap	Christian	Country	Soul/Blues	Rock/Pop
Group Mean	126.26	102.79	84.52	125.32	107.09
Other Groups (Mean)	104.81	112.36	114.20	107.47	110.88
N	53	54	31	31	51
Mann-Whitney U	3537.000	4065.500	2124.000	2439.000	4135.500
Asymp. Sig.	.031	.334	.015	.145	.707

## Discussion

The research questions have been addressed and the results suggest that further research may be warranted as the results bear out the assumptions upon which the study was undertaken. The author's expectation was that the values for the rap consumers might be different than the other populations. Indeed, in four of the nine areas chosen for analysis, the values reported by consumers of rap music were different than were the other groups combined. In the following paragraphs, the author will address each of the research questions independently, discuss relevant issues from the focus group work and finally, attempt to tie these together, compare findings to current literature and finally, draw some tentative conclusions.

*Research Question 1*

*Broadminded* is defined by Rokeach as "open minded" and by Merriam-Webster as "tolerant of varied views; inclined to condone minor departures from



conventional behavior” (2000, n. p.). Rap consumers placed a lower value on this value as compared to the soul/blues and rock/pop groups. The differences were not statistically significant, but they were evident. The Christian and country consumers, on the other hand, placed this value as more important than the other groups. The group who placed the most importance on the value of *Broadmindedness* was the group who consumed soul and blues music, while the rap consumers placed less relative value on this value than any other group.

One possible explanation is that this group is less tolerant and open to change in their attempt to maintain and protect the art and lifestyle that gives them identity and a sense of belonging. As discussed in the literature review, the media consumed by young people will help define who they are. They use the music and lyrics to define who they are socially and individually (Vannini, 2004). As suggested by Best and Kellner (1999), rap music is an outgrowth of a sense of oppression and defiant rebellion that was a part of the marginalized urban existence. These two factors combined may create a close minded consumer group which feels the need to protect what they perceive as their own music.

#### *Research Question 2*

For the value of an *Exciting Life*, the data revealed that consumers of rap music valued this as more important to a statistically significantly degree than did any of the other groups. The word “excite” is defined by Merriam-Webster (2008) as “to call to activity; to rouse to an emotional response; to arouse (as a strong emotional response) by appropriate stimuli” (n. p.). Based on the literature reviewed for this project, there was an expectation that this value would be of

great importance to rap consumers, and indeed, there was a statistically significant difference ( $p = .005$ ) between the mean value placed on an *Exciting Life* and the mean of all of the other groups combined, with rap consumers placing a much higher value on excitement than other groups.

As described by Dontinga (2006), excitement may be found by listening to music with violent lyrics. It has been reported that listening to music with violent lyrics can cause a temporary increase in aggressive thoughts and feelings. Best and Kellner (1999) suggest that by promoting a gangsta (exciting) lifestyle, rap producers may affect attitudes, behaviors and even values. This rap, according to Best and Kellner (1999) celebrates the outlaw, the pimp, the hedonistic pleasure seeker along with the drug dealer. While these may be dangerous activities and lifestyles, they certainly have an element of excitement. The other two groups which placed relatively greater importance on the value of an *Exciting Life* were the group who consumed soul/blues and country. While the differences between these groups and the combined groups were not statistically significant, the data indicated that excitement was more important to these groups than to consumers of Christian and pop/rock music. While the author expected to see this situation for the consumers of Christian music, the placement of this value by consumers of pop/rock music consumers was unexpected.

### *Research Question 3*

Based on the literature, it was expected that the value of *Pleasure* would be of greater importance to rap consumers than to the other group combined. Indeed, the study supported this expectation. The difference was, however, more

pronounced than was expected by the author. The mean for this value as reported by rap consumers was 88.75 as compared to a mean value for other groups combined was 116.78, which represented a statistically significant difference ( $p = .004$ ).

As reported by Dunham (2008) in a study of lyric from top rap songs of 2005, the lyrics in 77% of these songs contained references to drug abuse, mostly associated with partying and having a good time. Best and Kellner (1999) suggested that while rap is an indictment of racism and violence, it also provides a positive valorization of Blackness while celebrating Black culture, pride and creativity which may be positively associated. This provides a place to consider Bandura's (1989) social learning theory as it relates to media effects, in this case, rap music. Individuals often receive rewards (increased self-esteem, financial gain, praise or tension reduction) as a result of the negative behaviors and, therefore, these mimicked behaviors are reinforced. These rewards may come from the feelings associated with the consumption of music which glorifies antisocial behaviors.

The only other statistically significant difference found for the relative importance given to the value of *pleasure* was among those who reported Christian as their primary music preference. In the case of these consumers, *Pleasure* was rated as significantly less important (127.07) than it was by the other groups combined (104.41) ( $p=.022$ ). This was not a surprising finding as the lifestyle promoted by Christian music is often one of giving and self-sacrifice. Since the message of self denigration is clear in much of the music of that genre,

this result could be explained in at least two ways. One explanation could be that socially desired responses are chosen by Christian music consumers.

Other than the rap and Christian groups, none of the other group's responses reflected a significant difference. The consumers of soul/blues music and country placed more value on *Pleasure* than did the consumers of rock/pop music, but the differences were slight. The difference in placement for this value for the soul/blues group was more pronounced than for the country group. In fact, the country group's responses fell within two places of the groups combined.

The placement of this value by the consumers of the rock/pop genre was surprising. It was expected that the group would find *Pleasure* to be important, but, besides the Christian group, this group placed it lower than did any other group. While the difference did not reach a level of statistical significance, it is worth noting – (116.63 to 107.99). Based on previous research by the author, it was expected that the consumers of this type of music would situate *pleasure* closer to the placement reported by rap consumers for that value.

#### *Research Question 4*

The results for the value of *Imagination* were not surprising. The consumers of rap music did not report a value placement for this value that was different to a statistically significant degree. The data reflected that the consumers of rap did place a higher importance on the value of *Imagination* (108.33) as opposed to the other groups combined (110.53), it was not enough of a difference to rule out a chance finding.

The findings for the consumers of soul/blues and rock/pop suggest that

consumers of these genres also place more importance on *Imagination* than do consumers of Christian and country music. The data indicated that the group to which *Imagination* is the most important is rock/pop (97.98 as compared to 113.65) and the group to which this is the least important is the consumers of country music (120.03 as compared to all average for all groups of 108.35).

It was expected, based on research, that the moving away from the present and into a world of *Imagination* might be important to the rap consumers. Sillar's (1991) suggested in the personal success values system that happiness results from the ability to gain. It could be inferred then, that consumers may want to gain things that this genre celebrates that are really not a part of the actual lived experience of the consumers who took this survey. Research cited earlier by Sachs (2007) highlights some of the desired elements – extreme material possessions, excessive sex and drugs and money on demand. The consumers may not be able to actually gain some of the elements that are considered by the consumer's peer group to be important, but through a good and rich imaginary life, he or she might experience the feeling of happiness by living that lifestyle vicariously.

The conditions under which rap was formed certainly might make a consumer wish to get away. As cited earlier, Best and Keller (1999) found that rap was formed from a very specific and difficult set of circumstances – bad living conditions, welfare cuts, little opportunity to get a job and extreme violence, crime and drug use grew. It would not be surprising that a strong *imagination* could make these grim conditions easier to bear, but the value did not reach a

statistically significant difference.

*Research Question 5:*

The author expected to find that consumers of rap music place a greater level of importance on the value of *Freedom* than did the consumers of other music genres. In fact, the rap consumers did rank *Freedom* as more important than did the other groups, but the difference was not statistically significant ( $p=.124$ ). The only other group which rated *Freedom* relatively high were consumers of country music. The other groups placed relatively less importance on the value of *Freedom*.

As stated earlier, the expectation was that this value would be of greater significance to rap consumers than to others. This idea was based, in part, on the attitudes toward women reflected in some popular rap lyrics. Davis (2004) reported that the idea of being faithful was not found to be important in the lyrics. Quite the opposite was found. Women are seen as someone to date (wifey) or someone with whom to have sexual relations (shorty), but never as one worthy of a long term commitment.

In considering the family life of some of the consumers of rap music, it may be inferred that the family lives in which these consumers were reared may have been nontraditional – from divorced parents or single parent households. Having these situations as a model might discourage listeners from fostering a long term relationship and indeed, value their *Freedom* more than other groups' members might.

### *Research Question 6*

Again, the expectation was that the consumers of rap music would rate the value of *Independence* as higher than did the other combined groups. Once again, the expectation was met. Rap consumers ranked *Independence* higher (94.45), to a significantly significant degree than all of the other groups combined (114.96) ( $p=.040$ ). Interestingly, consumers of Christian music represented the other side of the picture, placing a statistically significant lesser rank (133.43) on the value of *Independence* than the other combined groups (102.33). This would seem to support the common expectations of both of the groups. The rap consumers are hearing and supporting music that glorifies *Freedom* from societal constraints and moral obligations. Davis (2004) reported a negative view of long term commitment present in popular rap lyrics. There appears to be a fondness for *Independence* as opposed to commitment. This may also be the result of the lived experience of the consumer. Many of these consumers have not seen commitment work well in their families and may have no faith in the concept.

Christian consumers, on the other hand, may have been exposed to a different set of norms and behavior that support the concept of dependence. The Christian religion encourages a strong dependence on God and preaches the importance of fidelity and traditional family systems. Perhaps this is why this value was ranked as more important by Christian consumers. Of the other groups in the study, all of those ranked the value of *Independence* as more important than the other combined groups, just not to a statistically significant level.

### *Research Question 7*

The expectation of the author for the value of *Obedience* was that it would be less important in the minds of rap consumers. This was not borne out in the study. While the rap group did rank *Obedience* as less important than the other combined groups, the difference was not to a statistically significant level. The only group for which there was a statistically significant finding on the positive or prosocial side was in the group of Christian consumers. They ranked the value of *Obedience* (75.74) much higher than did the other combined groups (121.21)( $p < .001$ ). Conversely, the Rock/pop group had a statistically significant difference in the other direction. Consumers in this category ranked *Obedience* as less important (133.49) as opposed to the other groups combined ranking (102.87)( $p = .002$ ).

While there was no significance in the level rap consumers placed *Obedience*, it was less important to this group than to the combined groups. With the exception of Christian, all groups placed *Obedience* as lower than the combined group. In looking at rap specifically, there are numerous examples of the disdain with which *Obedience* is viewed. Dunham's (2008) study revealed a tendency in lyrics to promote excessive drinking, violence, misogynistic treatment of women, drug use and breaking the law. By definition, most of these behaviors are illegal for teenagers, yet the music the teens listen to seems to glorify defying the rules. The breaking of the rules and laws represent disobedience and seems to support the idea that the lyrics may have an impact on the mind (or at least the actions) of the consumer.



### *Research Question 8*

The expectation of the author was that there would be less importance placed on the value of *Wisdom* by the group of rap consumers than by the other groups. This was the case. The rap group ranked the value of *Wisdom* as less important (111.33) than did the other groups (109.58), although not to a statistically significant degree.

The other group to place a relatively lower rank for this value was country music consumers. This is an odd pairing. Based on the literature regarding rap music and the general disrespect that seems obvious from the music toward education and the elderly – two common sources of *Wisdom* -- it was expected that a significant difference would be discovered. The difference was less than expected, but was in the expected direction. Additionally, as society shifts and more and more young people have very little to do with grandparents and other older members of their families and society, the exposure to *Wisdom* from those sources may be minimized. It may be difficult to respect something to which you perceive yourself to have very little exposure.

The Christian, soul/blues and pop/rock groups all placed *Wisdom* as relatively more important than did the other combined groups. The findings for the Christian group makes sense based on the idea that *Wisdom* is said to come from the Bible (Proverbs 2:6) as well as the mandates in the Bible to honor parents and take care of the elderly.

### *Research Question 9*

The author expected to find the value of *Self-Control* to be of relatively

little importance to the consumers of rap music. In this case, the author's expectation was met. The consumers of rap music rated the value of *Self-Control* as significantly less important (126.26) than did members of their peer group who listened to other genres (104.81). This represents a statistically significant difference between the groups ( $p = .031$ ).

This apparent lack of *Self-Control* was cited in the Birmingham study (2003) in which young women who consumed significant amounts of rap music were more likely to exhibit behaviors which suggested lack of *Self-Control* such as perpetrating violence against teachers, taking drugs, drinking alcohol and engaging in unprotected sex. Another study by the Prevention Research Center in 2006 found a pattern of increased alcohol abuse and commission of violent acts among young people who listen to rap music. Rodney Ray Howard, the eighteen-year-old who was charged with the killing of a patrolman who stopped him while he was listening to Tupac's "2pacolypseNow exhibited little *Self-Control* in dealing with that situation. According to Howard, the lyrics "made him have a fight back attitude instead of a stay away attitude when stopped for a missing headlight" (Kieser, 1999, p. 19). These examples from the literature along with the preliminary findings from this study suggest that the value of *Self-Control*, which is highly socially desirable, is being sublimated by other values or desires.

When analyzing the data from the other consumer groups, some interesting trends appeared. Consumers of country music, rock/pop and Christian music placed more importance on this value than did the consumers of rap and

soul/blues. The only statistically significant difference besides that found in the rap group was found in the country music listeners who placed that value of *Self-Control* at 84.52 as opposed to the other groups who rated *Self-Control* at 114.20 ( $p=.015$ ).

It was interesting that the differences, while in different directions, were significant for two very different genres. It was expected that the rap consumers would place a relatively lower significance level on *Self-Control*, but the rating by the country consumers was a surprise. More surprising was the amount of difference between the country consumers and the other combined groups. The difference between the means for the rap group and to the other groups combined was 21.45 as opposed to the same measure for the country group and the other groups combined was 29.68. This discrepancy was unexpected and could certainly be something on which to concentrate at a later date.

The findings for this value reflect the lifestyle depicted in much of the rap genre – excess in terms of sex, drug use, alcohol consumption, violence and a focus on materialism. The popular music in the rap genre sometimes glorifies these practices, and it is not surprising that the consumers of this type of music would find these behaviors, which exhibit little *Self-Control*, to be acceptable more often than do other groups.

## Chapter V

### ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

#### Focus Groups

In the focus groups students, who had volunteered to participate to receive extra credit, were given specific instructions and were asked to sign a consent form. The students were given questionnaires for each song (Appendix C) and asked to respond after each song was played. These songs included *Murder Rap* by Insane Clown Posse, *Chickenhead* by Three Six Mafia and *Hip Hop Police* by Chamillionaire. These songs were all discussed in the literature review section of the paper and are reflective of the type of music being investigated for this project. Following are the song lyrics, along with some of the reactions from the various groups:

#### *Murder Rap*

Wakin up with blood on my hands and I don't know why you motherfuckers tryin to get in my path. Don't be surprised when you get a shotgun up your ass. Instigators, I got one for that ass too. I'm gonna hang you from a street light, mangled and blue (eww). You on my shit like a fiend coke  
But if you say the wrong thing i'll put a slit in your throat. (Lyrics007, 2007)

While the response to this song varies from group to group, it was clear that most of the group members felt that it was extreme and not realistic to their life experiences. The White females seemed to be the most removed, their reactions included “disturbed,” “getting even,” “physical violence,” “crudeness” and “revenge.” The White males used some of the same words, such as “revenge” and “violence.”

They also included “death” and “crime.”

Group three (Black males) produced comments like “fake, but entertaining,” “I would listen to the beat and not the words,” “retarded,” and “supports some bad ideas.” The group of Black female group’s comments included: “drama,” “getting back at people,” “just words,” “hatred,” “forget the world” and “I don’t feel anything.”

Of all of the groups’ responses for this song, the response of the Black female group was the most diverse. The first two groups (White women and men) seemed to condemn the actions depicted in the song and expressed strong emotion in response to the lyrics. They seemed to focus on a significant amount of negative emotion. Group three (Black males), on the other hand, did not seem to have strong personal reactions. It was as if they distanced themselves and viewed the action in the song as fake and not relevant to themselves. The only significant personal remark was the remark by one volunteer that “you don’t want your girlfriend or your sister listening to this.”

The larger picture came from the group of Black women (group four), where the responses presented something of a dichotomy. On one hand, there were comments which suggested a very personal, protective reaction – with attack and revenge as the focus. On the other hand, there were comments which suggested no feeling or that it was all just drama. This group presented the most interesting responses for “Murder Rap.”

### *Chickenhead*

...now these chickenhead hoes see this platinum thick as white gold,  
a flock of broads follow me from the club to break they knees knowin

that's all i want straight out tha club, ...i'm tha playa who got u  
 chickenheads knockin at my door tellin me that you diggin me, tellin  
 me i'm yo man to be girlfriend its gone cost a fee, get yo rags and  
 work that streets, pay ya boy and make me rich so we keep them swisher's  
 lit. (LyricsKeeper, 2010)

After listening to the responses from the groups, two distinct views by the women became obvious. For the White women (group one), there was almost universal disgust, with words like “disgusting,” “annoying,” “degrading,” “disrespectful,” “I was offended,” “men can do what they want,” and “ashamed” being prevalent. The rancor seemed aimed at the men talked about in the song. Black women (group four), on the other hand, seemed to aim their considerable ire toward the women depicted in the song, using phrases and words like “they are flauntin’ in the club,” “hoes,” “trailer trash,” “they don’t know who they baby-daddy is,” “if you can’t pay your bills, you are a chicken head,” “if you are letting your mamma keep your baby while you are at the clubs, you are a chickenhead.” Interestingly, this group did not agree that the term was of a sexual nature, although that idea was discussed.

Of the two male groups, the White male group seemed to view this song as very sexual and much fun. They used words like “disrespect to women,” “prostitutions,” “sexually aggressive toward women,” and “objectification of women.” The same group, though, had comments like: “turn it up, dude,” “partying,” “good beat” and “we listened to that in high school, but we did not know what it meant.”

In group three (Black males), there was an apparent disconnect between their responses and those of the other groups. They described chickenheads as women who “ain’t got no hair,” “women who hang around men who got bling and stuff,” and used the words “comic,” “hilarious,” “joking,” and “funny” in their reactions. While groups one (White women) and two seemed almost protective of the women being described in the song, group three (Black men) seemed to dismiss the obvious, and group four (Black women) seemed to want to join in on the attacks and insults hurled at the women in the song.

This may be one of the most interesting findings of the project. The women who are marginalized by the music (Black women) seem to be protective of the artists and the genre. They even seem to join them, to a degree, in blaming and further degrading the women in the songs. It is almost as if there is a need to be on the side of the attackers so they will not be at all identified with the victims (the other Black women in the songs).

#### *Hip Hop Police*

Officer I didn't do it, you can't blame me for this. Could you please loosen up the handcuffs on my wrists? You can call me what you wanna but maybe I ain't a snitch No cooperation is exactly what you will get Til I talk to my lawyer, you get no reply (You've obviously been watching too much CSI I'm not a crash dummy so don't even try To talk your dirty trash to me, no BFI If you are not guilty of anything, then why did you run?) Cause you the police and plus I saw you cocking your gun And the chamber wasn't empty, it

was obviously one (If you think I'm believing that one, your obviously dumb) Huh? (I know that you heard the sirens, you dived in To the vehicle you was driving and ridin And you shouldn't be whining about abidin By the law, nah it's obvious your lying) With so much drama in the industry Hip Hop Police are listening Be careful or you'll be history Looks like another unsolved mystery It's murda, murda, murda Ah it's murda, murda, murda Yeah it's murda (LyricsKeeper, 2007).

The responses to this song seem to indicate an “us” versus “them” mentality. The police represent the “them” along with anyone who might support their actions. The “us” is anyone who recognizes the error of the ways of the police – establishment. Here, identity seemed to be important. Comments from group three (Black men) and group four (Black females) seem to fall more on the side of feeling kinship with the artist. The ability to identify with the plight of the artist was strong.

Of all of the songs, this one seemed to be the most uniting. In all of the groups, comments indicated an understanding of the feelings of the artists. In group one (White women), comments included: “innocent, but blamed,” “guilty until proven innocent,” “placing blame,” “stereotyping,” “prejudice” and “not fair.” Group two (White women) produced the following comments: “dirty cop,” “oppression,” “police hate,” “unlawfully convicted,” “profiling” and “police are out to get Black people.” Group three (Black men) had the following reactions: “police warning,” “this could happen in real life,” “rappers are arrested because of what they say in their songs, not because of what they really do” and “warning to rappers.” Group four (Black



women) recorded the following comments: “true,” “murder case,” “profiling by police,” “false accusation,” “we feel like police are gang-bangers to us,” “Blacks are targeted by police,” “Freedom of speech is stifled” and “I can relate to all of these things.”

While there were different levels of identity expressed, this song seemed to be the one on which there was the most consensus among groups. One thought is that this song is viewed as being more about individuals (young adults) versus the establishment (police), as opposed to racial or class divisions that are often expressed in this genre.

### Survey

In an effort to get a sense of how the different groups reacted to the music and to further explore this genre, a simple pen and paper survey was administered to the group after each clip was played. The questions were included in the group procedures to elicit discussion and to provide a way to compare reactions of various groups. The following tables represent the summary of the data gathered from this survey.

Table 12

*This/These Song(s) Would Get My Attention If I Heard Part of It/Them on the Radio*

GROUP	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
White Female	3	3	6	9	15
White Males	0	4	3	5	12
Black Males	3	2	2	0	2
Black Females	6	2	3	0	4

*Group 1 = White Female, Group 2 = White Males, Group 3 =Black Males, Group 4 = Black Females*

Table 13

*I Would Feel Comfortable Listening to This/These Song(s) With a Member of the Opposite Sex*

GROUP	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
White Female	4	2	7	12	11
White Males	1	5	4	4	10
Black Males	0	1	2	2	4
Black Females	2	2	2	3	4

*Group 1 = White Female, Group 2 = White Males, Group 3 =Black Males, Group 4 = Black Females*

Table 14

*This/These Song(s) Make(s) Me Feel*

GROUP	Very Relaxed	Relaxed	No Opinion	Un comfortable	Very Uncomfortable
White Female	0	1	8	13	8
White Males	0	1	4	6	13
Black Males	0	0	7	0	3
Black Females	0	3	4	4	4

*Group 1 = White Female, Group 2 = White Males, Group 3 =Black Males, Group 4 = Black Females*

Table 15

*After Hearing These Lyrics, I Feel That I Can Relate to These Artists*

GROUP	On a Very Deep Level				Not At All
White Female	3	1	5	3	24
White Males	1	2	6	0	14
Black Males	0	1	2	1	5
Black Females	3	2	2	3	5

*Group 1 = White Female, Group 2 = White Males, Group 3 =Black Males, Group 4 = Black Females*

Table 16

*The Artist Is Right to Feel the Way He Does.*

GROUP	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
White Female	8	6	14	4	4
White Males	5	4	11	1	3
Black Males	0	1	4	1	3
Black Females	0	0	5	0	10

*Group 1 = White Female, Group 2 = White Males, Group 3 = Black Males, Group 4 = Black Females*

#### Discussion of Group Results

Group one was composed of 12 White women. After reviewing the audio recording of the session from group one (White women), the author came away with the perspective that, while these young women are somewhat oblivious to the lyrics of the music, they do enjoy and consume this music. When presented with the lyrics on paper, many were surprised by what they read. One said that she had sung along with “Murder Rap” many times and did not know what they were saying. They seem to view the lyrics as quite offensive once they hear them. When faced with the reality of the lyrics, some of the young women took the approach that it was satire and was funny, while others suggested that they sensed racial profiling and the concept of “guilty until proven innocent.” One young lady commented that she liked to listen to it, but had never paid attention to the words. One said that after hearing and paying attention to the lyrics, she would likely not listen to it again. One participant said that she would continue to listen to it, but just not with her

grandmother.

While some of the women in group one (White women) reported feeling sorrow and frustration for the alleged plight of the artists, only a very small number (three of 36 responses) suggested any ability to relate to them. This was far less than the number (eight of 15 responses) of Black women who said they could relate to, or identify with, the artist. Considering the question of whether the artists had a right to feel 74 as they did, the Black female group had 10 of 15 responses which indicated an agreement with this idea. The majority of the responses from White females reflected ambivalence (14 out of 24 possible responses) and more believed that the artists were wrong than thought they were right.

The second group was composed of White males. After reviewing the audio recording of their session, the author came away with the perspective that these young men consume and seem to enjoy rap music. This group, who represent the (allegedly) largest consumer demographic of rap music, has an outsider's view. While research suggests that a sense of place, identity and identification with others in your same group are a significant drive in the genre, these young men see rap as entertainment. While some of these young men knew the beat and the lyrics, most of them had never stopped to consider what the lyrics said. When asked if they could relate to the artists, the majority of the young men indicated that they could not.

Group three was composed of Black men. While there were only three in the group, once they became comfortable, these young men provided considerable insight. They seemed to have a very remote or removed perspective of this music.

The young men seemed to be open about their opinions, but they were not strong opinions. It was as if the songs and themes were commonplace, and they had really never thought about them being different from their lived experience. In looking at “Murder Rap,” the biggest issue among these men was the method of killing. The fact that there was killing did not appear to be an issue. The concern seemed to stem more from whether or not someone could really be hanged from a streetlamp.

Group number four was composed of five young Black women. After reviewing the audio recording of this session, the author was enlightened. The comments provided a perspective and context that was not understood prior to this exercise. While it seemed that the women were accepting of the music, they seemed to view it more figuratively than did the other groups. They were offended by the first song, which they were quick to point out, was by a White group. The discussion of “Chickenhead” was the most puzzling. It seemed that the meaning suggested by most critics (one who performs oral sex) was lost on these women. They seemed to find the term inoffensive, but not desired. The overall consensus seemed to be that the “chickenhead” referred to in the song was an irresponsible club-hopping party woman. However, those behaviors were not altogether unacceptable.

The level of identity was striking. At least three of the young ladies indicated that they could relate with all of these songs - from fear of the police to dealing with chickenheads. They seemed to view racial profiling and inequitable treatment as a part of what they expected in everyday life. Another observation was disturbing. While the White female group had comments like “drama” and funny for “Hip Hop

Police,” the Black women’s group used words like “true” and “frame game.”

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

#### Statistically Significant Results

This was an exploratory study from the start, and as such there are no hypotheses, only research questions. There was, however, a set of expectations against which the research data were compared. There were nine questions which have been addressed from three perspectives. Through the use of a thorough review of current literature and of relevant information on music and values, a pencil and paper survey of 219 individual and a series of focus groups, the research questions have been explored. The purpose of this study was to investigate the possibility that consumers of rap music might have a different values structure than the value structure reported by consumers of other types of music.

In considering the results of both the survey and the focus groups, some correlations present themselves. Some of the areas addressed in the literature review included sociology, psychology, interpersonal communication and technology use. It was expected that there would be a difference in values found and this was the case. In analyzing the values, nine were studied in great detail. Of those nine, rap consumers placed a significantly different level of importance on four of them, including an *Exciting Life*, *Pleasure*, *Independence* and *Self-Control*. The first three were found to be significantly more important to the rap consumers than they were to the other groups combined. The value of *Self-Control* reflected significantly less importance as ranked by the consumers of rap as opposed to the other groups combined. In the following paragraphs, these four values will be



discussed in light of the survey, the focus groups and the literature review.

One particular finding was of great interest – the views of Black women. As the literature suggests, much of the popular rap music lyrics denigrate women using such terms as Block bender, woo-wop, skeezer, hood rat, ho, all mean promiscuous female...freak, bitch, gold digger, hoochie mama, runner, flipper, shorty, none of which are positive. The Black women in the focus groups, however, reported the most protective attitudes of the genre and of the artists than any other group with comments such as “I know where they are coming from,” “I really understand them,” and “I am not offended by them.”

The ideas of empowerment and feminism were absent in the replies of the young women. According to Bynoe (2006), the most telling of attitudes among Black women was a disdain for Black women by both Black men and women. Interestingly, the females were likely to use the same terminology to describe each other and report not trusting other Black women. If the women are denigrated by a genre that harms their self-image and causes them to distrust each other, why do they defend it? If they are protective of the very genre that marginalizes them, there seems to be an area of great concern for communication scholars.

Communication theory suggests numerous ways to view the impact of various media content consumption. There are those who argue strong, direct and powerful effects. Others suggest that consumers use media in a more selfish way to meet needs they have. The expectation of the author is that, from a theoretical perspective, the findings in this study represent a point somewhere between the two.

From an effects approach, the consumption of rap appears to be correlated with a values system that is less socially acceptable than those reported by consumers of other groups. From a uses and gratification approach, the consumers of rap seem to use the music of the rap genre as a way to create and share identities and to deal with some of the sociological issues which may be a part of their lives.

### *Pleasure*

In considering the values for which there were statistically significant differences, it will be helpful to look at them individually. *Pleasure* was ranked by rap consumers as more important than it was for other groups. While this was expected in the RVS, the focus groups did not reinforce this as might be expected. While *Pleasure* was ranked high for the group of rap consumers, it was not reflected positively in the comments from focus groups. In the group of young Black females, in fact, the only references to fun or *Pleasure* were negative, specifically in reference to the responses to “Chickenhead” The women seemed to view the hedonistic seeking of *Pleasure* instead of acting responsibly in a negative light. Some of the comments in the focus group that reflect this attitude include “flauntin’ in the club,” “tryin’ to flaunt, can’t pay your bills you are a chicken head,” “if they don’t know they baby daddy they a chicken head,” “they have no goals, they are very content in the clubs with their momma at home watching their baby.”

In looking at the survey results for the focus group, one more very broad point could be made. While the idea of *Pleasure* may be viewed negatively in some of these groups, it could be argued that the songs are enjoyed and consumed for

*Pleasure*. In the survey question about a rap song causing them to stop and listen, the ones who speak of devaluing *Pleasure* are the same ones who indicated that they would stop and listen to music about those very things they spoke of viewing negatively.

One other observation is that the group of consumers who reported listening to Christian music as their primary genre ranked the value of *Pleasure* lower to a statistically significant degree. One possible explanation is that many of the members of the focus group were all students at a Christian college and that may have had an effect on the answers. There may have been a felt need to provide socially desirable responses.

#### *Exciting Life*

Another value for which there was a statistically significant difference was that of an *Exciting Life*. Consumers of rap music rated the value of an *Exciting Life* as important, but what that means could be viewed in different ways. What is exciting to one individual may be terrifying to another. Focus group members from the Black male group provided some interesting insights into this dynamic. Quotes include “he (the artist) is putting himself in a tight situation by putting himself in the scenario as the one who is being arrested, this could happen in real life,” and “I saw this in television and I know how it feels.” Other comments which reflect a different point of view include: “disgusting,” “crude,” “overboard,” “horrible,” “dumb” and “retarded.” These comments came from the White female group. So the same content that one group could identify with and seemed to find exciting was viewed as almost entirely negative by another.

### *Independence*

The results of the RVS supported the idea that rap consumers value *Independence* more than do other groups. Conversely, the consumers of Christian music ranked the value of *Independence* as significantly less important than did other groups. What inferences can be drawn from these findings? This finding, perhaps, reflects a part of the reality for consumers. As discussed in the literature review, there seems to be a need for autonomy and to be able to take care of oneself in the community from which the genre grew. The consumers of rap may identify with the feelings in the songs even if they do not face the same necessity, in reality. Of the participants in the RVS, all of whom were in college, the need to feel independent themselves may not be as important as the need to identify with that value as it resonates in the music. As discussed by Aday (2005), emotion and identity both play a significant role in the use and impact of music.

A review of the focus group findings applicable to this value suggests some differing points of view. Some of the comments from the Black female group included “forget the world,” and “I don’t feel anything.” The White male group members made the following comments: “disrespectful of women and men,” “throwin’ money at women to get my way with them,” and “no respect for relationships.” While the comments of the groups seem to support both the literature and the RVS, there seems to be a difference drawn between being independent from the world and responsibility as opposed to being independent of relationships. In all of these cases, though, the importance of *Independence* to consumers of rap music seems to be fully supported.

### *Self-Control*

Rap consumers ranked the value of *Self-Control* as less important, to a significantly significant degree, than did groups who consume other types of music. This was not an unexpected finding based on focus group comments and the literature review. While the focus group results were mixed, there was a strong contingent whose comments seemed to support the actions and lifestyles exhibited in the lyrics of the rap songs. While the word "*Self-Control*" was not specifically uttered, the support indicated for antisocial behaviors, by extension, would seem to minimize the importance of this value.

From the literature review, there were numerous examples of both lyrics and findings from other studies which do not support a need for *Self-Control*. In fact, the opposite seemed to be the case, with lyrics suggesting no need to curtail activities that one enjoys and research findings which suggest that a lack of *Self-Control* is more common in rap consumers than would be found in the general population. The authors of a 2003 study of 522 African American girls in Birmingham, Alabama, found that the more rap music (consumed by way of videos) young women watched, the more likely they were to have perpetrated violence against teachers, contracted a sexually-transmitted disease, drunk alcohol and taken drugs, or to have been arrested. Another study by the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Berkeley, CA, found a pattern of increased alcohol abuse and commission of violent acts among young people who listen to rap (Rap Effects, 2006). The findings in the RVS support the claims made in the literature.

Consumers of country music placed *Self-Control* on a higher level to a statistically significant degree. Further research would be needed to understand this dynamic.

### Other Findings

#### *Broadmindedness*

While the previously mentioned values reflected significant differences, there were other interesting findings that were directional, but not different to a statistically significant degree. For the value of *Broadmindedness*, the rap consumers felt that it was not as important as did the other groups. In looking at the focus group questions, the one that seems to fit most closely with that value is “The artist has a right to feel the way he does.” If the conventional wisdom that the majority of rap is consumed by White men is accurate, then this *Broadmindedness* idea, while not supported by the RVS, is supported by the focus group results. The group in which the previous question was answered “Agree” or “Disagree” the most was the group composed of White men. There were nine positive responses and three negative responses to this question for this group. The group composed of White females had 14 positive responses and eight negative, the Black female group had zero positive and 10 negatives and the Black males had one positive and four negative responses. The author found it interesting that the group of Black males, whose demographic are the primary creators and generators of rap music, were the only group not lending any agreement to the artists.

### *Imagination*

There were no statistically significant differences for this value with any of the groups. The rap consumers did, however, rank *Imagination* as more important than did the other groups. The conditions under which the genre was developed may shed some light on the importance of *Imagination*. The development of a good *Imagination* may help to navigate the harsh, inner city neighborhoods by providing an escape from these conditions.

### *Freedom*

The value of *Freedom* did not differ from group to group to a statistically significant degree. Rap consumers did, however, place a relatively higher value on this than did other groups. This seems to correlate to the findings in the literature which suggest that there is a need for autonomy and lack of encumbrances on the part of artists. By extension, perhaps, consumers may emulate attitudes and behaviors found in the genre.

### *Obedience*

Of all of the groups surveyed, rap consumers ranked the value of *Obedience* lower than did any other group. As noted in the literature review, there are numerous lyrics which seem to encourage disobedience and rebellion. One example of the of rap lyrics that seem to endorse disobedience involves Rodney Ray Howard. According to Howard, rap lyrics “made him have a fight back attitude instead of a stay away attitude when stopped for a missing headlight (Dotinga, 2006, p.3). “By the Time I Get to Arizona” by Public Enemy depicts Black revolutionaries in Arizona protesting the banning of the Martin

Luther King Day holiday and shows them assaulting White politicians and attempting to spark revolution. These examples seem to suggest that *Obedience* is not a value which is held in high regard. Though the findings are not statistically significant, they do point in the same direction suggested in the literature.

Interestingly, this value was of great importance to two other groups: consumers of Christian music and rock/pop music. Of all the variables studied, the positive correlation between the value of *Obedience* and the consumption of Christian music was the strongest with a significance level of  $<.001$ . This emphasis on *Obedience* in the minds of Christian music consumers was expected as many of the teachings of Christianity involve sublimation of individual will to the will of God. Additionally, *Obedience* to both God and any authority put in place by Providence is a very strong teaching of the Bible.

### *Wisdom*

The importance of *Wisdom* was not noted by any group to any statistically significant degree. The group which placed the most importance on the value of *Wisdom* was the group who consumed country music. It was not a surprise that the rap consumers did not find conventional *Wisdom* important, as no mentions of this were found in either the literature or the focus groups.

### Why It Matters

How does this all work together? As young people become more involved with media consumption -- engage in less face to face interaction with peers -- some of the ties that hold society together which are based on positive or



prosocial behaviors, may be strained. If the expectations to behave in a prosocial manner are lowered, it follows that the values that support these behaviors will be different, as values drive behavior.

But how are values tied to music consumption? Ratcliffe (1983) attempted to understand the link between the music to which one listened and the behavior exhibited by the consumer of a particular type of music. He used the idea that a certain type of music or even a set of chords is likely tied back to a positive experience the listener may associate with that particular music. He also suggested that negative associations are likely made as well. Like the positive connections, the negative associations may be so deeply buried that the significance is forgotten - it simply evokes a strong response. It is this response - the negative - which has concerned authorities for many years. What will cause music to have a huge negative impact on some listeners and no obvious effect on others?

The reactions one experiences may be closely tied to the idea of “emotional memory” in which an individual may experience a strong emotional response to a person, smell or space without any idea why they have a response (Adler & Proctor, 2007). Early emotional memories “are salient and are templates that exert a continuing effect on adult behavior, even though such memories may never be retrieved. The memory of early emotionally salient interactions continues to exert its effect despite the fact that these experiences cannot be remembered” (Modell, 2005, p. 557).

The author cannot argue a direct cause-effect relationship between the

music an individual consumes and his values, which affect behavior. While there appears to be a connection, it is a loose association which cannot be empirically demonstrated. The more likely cause of any change in behavior or values is that this change is in response to a certain stimuli (the type of music) and prior conditioning.

Radcliffe (1983) argues that, because of this conditioning, suggestions of violence and disrespect of women, pictures of rappers, and publicized disrespect shown by rap icons may cause associations that result in very strong feelings. These feelings may cause discomfort as suggested in the focus group results for the question about comfort level in listening to some rap music with members of the opposite sex. The Black males were the most expressive about the issue of devaluing and disrespecting women that is prevalent in the genre.

Looking at the male consumers as the primary area of consideration, some areas should be considered. The family structure continues to change and about half of all children will reside for at least a part of their teen years in single-parent households, usually with their mothers (Amato, 2005). More young people grow up without significant male role models in their immediate family. These young men may find a lack or need in their lives that may be addressed using music as have many young men in previous generations. What is different is that the situation into which the media content is being disseminated is different (due to sociological and economic changes) and the content is more graphic, as demonstrated earlier.

According to Aday and Austin (2000), song lyrics "provide a uniquely

potent means of arriving at basic attitudes thoughts and feelings" (p. 5). Music lyrics deal with real problems faced by America and its population. The fact that music plays an important role in our society has been well documented. In 1970, Russell reported that music is often overlooked as a source of information regarding human values, but that lyrics provide a rich area for exploration. This leads one to the conclusion that popular music may provide bountiful information and valuable insight into American culture.

While the enjoyment of music is, by no means, a negative behavior in and of itself, the potential effects of the music on the values exhibited by the consumer should be considered. There is a strong assumption that there is a link between music and psychology and there is evidence to support that link (Cooper, 1991). That link, combined with the prevalence of music in the lives of young adults leads to the belief that an attempt should be made to determine if there is, indeed, a significant relationship between the amount of music consumed, the types of music consumed and the values reported and expressed by the consumers.

The music itself, specifically the negative content, may or may not have a direct effect on the values and behaviors of the consumer. The emotional, sociological, educational, and economic realities that are present in the lives of consumers may, however, provide fertile ground into which negative ideas and attitudes may be planted. If the effect was, as demonstrated, great in a time that was less chaotic and more stable than now, how much more of an impact might negative content have now? Many of these consumers live a life with very few

roots and little stability through no fault of their own. It seems safe to surmise that the effects would be greater now than ever before, and it would be wise to carefully consider the content and its potential effects.

### Limitations

This research had several limitations. While there was an attempt to gather a large amount and variety of data in order to increase the likelihood of gaining a realistic perspective of the situation, there were areas in which improvements could have been made. Some of the areas include participant selection, the administration of the survey and possibly, a different approach to the use of focus groups.

Participant selection was based strictly on convenience and was limited to students in community college classrooms in one system who were willing to participate in the paper and pencil part of the survey. Additionally, the participants were all from the same geographical area – as they all attended community college branches in the same tri-county area. Because of the use of a college setting, the age range was limited to five years. A wider age range would produce more reliable data.

Another limitation to consider is that only individuals enrolled in college were surveyed. While this was helpful to the researcher, it is not in any way, representative of the population. A study using a more diverse sample would likely yield more accurate data. The use of a convenience sample was necessary in this case, due to the geographical and financial restraints on the researcher. However, a random survey approach would most certainly have been a more

desirable one. The participants in this case represented a narrow range of ethnicity/ages/socioeconomic status, etc. A larger, more diverse sample would have benefited our results. This would likely include multiple colleges/groups on campus which would have enhanced the diversity of the sample.

The survey was administered face-to-face, during class time primarily by the researcher. This brings to mind two limitations. One, when asking about some of the more personal types of values, students may be more inclined to give a socially desired response when they are in the presence of their teacher, their peers and the researcher. In this case, it is likely that the researcher was an issue. A middle-aged White female, asking questions such as these may get a different answer than would another research who was more similar to the majority of the participants. Another survey issue was that many of the participants failed to understand the directions and completed the survey incorrectly, causing many surveys to be removed from the final analysis. Although the instructions had been tested in a pilot study, there was still some misunderstanding and the participants did not ask for clarification. Perhaps another researcher who was more like the majority of the participants might have made the participants more comfortable expressing confusion.

Focus groups were used to gather more qualitative data and a better picture of some of the feeling and attitudes of individuals toward rap music. There were four groups assembled from volunteers who were given extra credit for participating. The groups were broken down by sex and race, so there was a Black female group, a White female group, a Black male group and a White male

group. The population is more diverse than these groups suggest. A less discreet set of group parameters would allow for a more representative ethnic breakdown.

The number of participants in the groups ranged from three in the Black male group to twelve in the White female group. While the literature on focus groups suggests that these numbers are acceptable, this experience showed that for this type of inquiry, both extremes had limitations. In the group of three, the young men seemed more hesitant to insert comments and assert their opinions. They answered direct questions and participated, but seemed a little uneasy about expressing feelings. This lack of candor may well be based on gender and ethnic roles, but it could be that the small number felt too intimate for these young men. Additionally, the members of the groups knew each other, as they were in the same major. Conversely, the White female group was composed of twelve members, and it was difficult to hear and note all that was being said. These young women, most Communication students, had a lot to say and not all of it was relevant. There seemed to be an effort by a few of the women to be the center of attention, resulting in the inability of some of the more reticent ones to be heard. Based on this experience, perhaps a better size for these focus groups would have been for five to eight participants.

While the focus group moderators were trained in advance of the focus group, more training and perhaps, role-playing, might have been useful. Also, these moderators were known to participants which may have hindered candor among participants. All of these focus groups were conducted in the final week before the Christmas holidays and that may have been an issue as participants

were hurried and focused on taking final exams.

#### Future Research

Unencumbered by time and financial constraints, future research could be vastly improved. In dealing with the pen and paper surveys, the most obvious improvement would be the use of a random sample to gather more generalizable data. The use of a survey in a face to face setting could be improved by utilizing a setting other than a classroom. The fact that the students who took the survey were in the same setting as they were on a regular basis may have caused them to be less attentive than they might have been in a more separate setting. Using a setting other than a classroom would also be helpful in gaining participation from individuals who were not college students. The current survey only studied college students and this does not accurately reflect the population who consume music. Another possible improvement would be to have a moderator who was not so obviously different than the participants. Finally, in regard to the pen and paper survey, an improvement might be the use of an online survey. Potential benefits would include the ability to gather more data from a larger sample and to be able to quickly turn the data around because the coding would not have to be done by hand.

Regarding the focus groups, numerous improvements are possible. Improved training and practice would make the moderators better able to move among topics, enhance participation and tease out more data from the participants. Regarding the choice of participants, a random selection would have enhanced the data. This research was primarily divided along sex and racial

lines, the only races represented were Black and White, while the population is more diverse than that. Perhaps a more diverse sample which was more representative of the population would be more appropriate.

The focus group members were asked to listen to three clips from popular rap songs, record their responses and then discuss their reactions to the songs. Some of the comments from group members included suggestions to use a wider variety of songs. To address this, instead of three songs, using six or seven songs may provide an opportunity to glean more information about different topics. To add more songs, it would be necessary to provide a longer period of time in which to complete the focus group. The focus groups in the current study took between 25 and 35 minutes to complete their work. Even with the current number of songs, the recording sounded rushed and a longer period of time would likely have helped. Future groups would likely need at least 90 minutes if the number of songs were to be increased.

For the current study, audio recording was done and students were asked to complete a survey for each different song. A more thorough record of the group's work would have been helpful. While the audio recording was helpful, a video recording would have allowed for the research to analyze the visual nonverbal elements. Additionally, an assistant to the moderator would be helpful. This person would be there to handle giving out paperwork and cuing the songs while the moderator concentrated on making sure the conversations flowed smoothly and that all participants were engaged in the discussion.

Another suggestion for future research would be to conduct the groups in



other geographical areas more similar to the context in which the producers were located. For instance, conducting the focus groups in inner city areas of New York or Los Angeles, where much of the music was (or is) created, may enhance the understanding of the reaction of Black women to the music.

Considering reactions to the music, one more area of potential difference is that of regional rap. Many regions have distinct flavors of rap music that are specific to those regions. Focusing on the reactions to, and the effects of, these distinct types of music on these specific consumers would be enlightening.

In considering areas in which to recommend future research, two topics seem obvious. As stated earlier, the views of women toward the music seemed protective and the women, more than any other group, seemed supportive of the artists. Future research might focus on how and why the women who consume the music are affected. They appear to deny the importance of the lyrics as they relate to themselves as women. Additionally, they seem to need to rationalize the need of the artists to portray them in a negative light.

Another area that provides an interesting area of consideration is that of the Black men and their view of the lyrics and the genre. In the focus groups, they reported using the music as entertainment, but seemed to remove themselves from the content. They seemed to know, however, that the lyrics were not wholesome, as they reported that they would not feel comfortable listening to them with members of the opposite sex. It would be interesting to explore if these two, seemingly dichotomous views presented by both groups, are able to coexist peacefully, or if they create some sort of cognitive dissonance

or internal tension.

This study, in the opinion of the author, has barely scratched the surface of the myriad ways in which the connections among music consumption, values development and behavior may be explored. There is much to be learned about rap music and effects it may have on consumers. Additionally, this methodology may provide a tool for exploring other types of music and potential effects of those genres on consumers.

APPENDIX A  
ROKEACH VALUES SURVEY

On the following two pages are two lists of values, each in alphabetical order. Each value is accompanied by a short description and a blank space. Your goal is to rank each value in its order of importance to you for each of the two lists. Study each list and think of how much each value may act as a guiding principle in your life.

To begin, select the value that is of most importance to you. Write the number 1 in the blank space next to that value. Next, choose the value is of second in importance to you and write the number 2 in the blank next to it. Work your way through the list until you have ranked all 18 values on this page. The value that is of least importance to you should appear in Box 18.

When you have finished ranking all 18 values, turn the page and rank the next 18 values in the same way. Please do each page separately.

When ranking, take your time and think carefully. Feel free to go back and change your order should you have second thoughts about any of your answers. When you have completed the ranking of both sets of values, the result should represent an accurate picture of how you really feel about what's important in your life.

Please rank the following items from 1 to 18, with 1 being most important and 18 being least important to you.

**Terminal Values**

- \_\_\_ **A Comfortable Life** - a prosperous life
- \_\_\_ **Equality**- brotherhood and equal opportunity for all
- \_\_\_ **An Exciting Life**-a stimulating, active life
- \_\_\_ **Family Security**-taking care of loved ones
- \_\_\_ **Freedom**-independence and free choice
- \_\_\_ **Health**-physical and mental well-being
- \_\_\_ **Inner Harmony**-Freedom from inner conflict
- \_\_\_ **Mature Love** - sexual and spiritual intimacy
- \_\_\_ **National Security** - protection from attack
- \_\_\_ **Pleasure** - an enjoyable, leisurely life
- \_\_\_ **Salvation**-saved; eternal life
- \_\_\_ **Self-Respect**-self-esteem
- \_\_\_ **A Sense of Accomplishment**-a lasting contribution
- \_\_\_ **Social Recognition**-respect and admiration
- \_\_\_ **True Friendship**-close companionship
- \_\_\_ **Wisdom**-a mature understanding of life
- \_\_\_ **A World at Peace**-a world free of war and conflict
- \_\_\_ **A World of Beauty**-beauty of nature and the arts

Please rank the following items from 1 to 18, with 1 being most important and 18 being least important to you.

**Instrumental Values**

- \_\_\_ **Ambitious**-hardworking and aspiring
- \_\_\_ **Broadminded**-open-minded
- \_\_\_ **Capable**-competent; effective
- \_\_\_ **Clean**-neat and tidy
- \_\_\_ **Courageous**--standing up for your beliefs
- \_\_\_ **Forgiving**-willing to pardon others
- \_\_\_ **Helpful**-working for the welfare of others
- \_\_\_ **Honest**-sincere and truthful
- \_\_\_ **Imaginative**-daring and creative
- \_\_\_ **Independent**-self-reliant; self-sufficient
- \_\_\_ **Intellectual**-intelligent and reflective
- \_\_\_ **Logical**-consistent; rational
- \_\_\_ **Loving**-affectionate and tender
- \_\_\_ **Loyal**-faithful to friends or the group
- \_\_\_ **Obedient**-dutiful; respectful
- \_\_\_ **Polite**-courteous and well-mannered
- \_\_\_ **Responsible** -dependable and reliable
- \_\_\_ **Self-controlled**-restrained; self-disciplined

(Rokeach, 1979, pp. 62-63).

## APPENDIX B

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions as carefully as possible. Please do not place your name anywhere on the survey or identify yourself in any way.

## Demographic Information

Age:            under 18\_\_\_\_ 18-24\_\_\_\_ over 24\_\_\_\_

Sex:            Male\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_

Classification: Freshman\_\_Sophomore\_\_Junior\_\_Senior\_\_Other\_\_

## Music Interests

Please rank your consumption of the following musical genres from most consumption (1) to least consumption (5):

\_\_\_\_Christian    \_\_\_\_Country    \_\_\_\_Rock/Pop    \_\_\_\_Rap    \_\_\_\_Soul/Blues

Please estimate how much time you spend consuming music daily

\_\_\_\_less than 1 hour\_\_\_\_1 to 2 hours\_\_\_\_2 to 4 hours

\_\_\_\_5 to 6 hours\_\_\_\_more than 6 hours

What is your primary source of music?

\_\_\_\_download from iTunes    \_\_\_\_download from Internet (other)

\_\_\_\_purchase CD's\_\_\_\_other

## APPENDIX C

## FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Group number\_\_\_\_\_

Clip number\_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions after listening to the songs. Please do not begin the process until you are instructed to do so. Thank you for your cooperation in this research.

1. This song would get my attention if I heard it on the radio.

Strongly agree    Agree    No opinion    Disagree    Strongly disagree

2. I would feel comfortable listening to this with a member of the opposite sex:

Strongly agree    Agree    No opinion    Disagree    Strongly disagree

3. This song makes me feel:

Very Relaxed    Relaxed    No opinion    Uncomfortable    Very Uncomfortable

4. After hearing these lyrics, I feel that I can relate to this artist.

Very deeply - - - - - Not at all

5. This artist has a right to feel the way s/he does.

Strongly agree    Agree    No opinion    Disagree    Strongly disagree

Note: No demographic information was collected because the members of these focus groups were chosen based on race and sex, and the age was known within a designated frame

## APPENDIX D

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



## THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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**HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE  
 NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **10070801**

PROJECT TITLE: **Does Rap Have a Bad Rap? The Effects of Rap Music on Consumers**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **07/09/2010 to 11/01/2010**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Janet Mingon Wilson Kucia**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts & Letters**

DEPARTMENT: **Mass Communication**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **07/27/2010 to 07/26/2011**

*Lawrence A. Hosman*

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.  
 HSPRC Chair

*8-2-2010*

Date



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