A Survey of Music Therapists' Attitudes and Beliefs about the Relationship of Popular Music to Adolescent Development

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to survey music therapists regarding their current beliefs and attitudes of popular music and its relation to normal, healthy adolescent development. Music therapists use popular music quite often with clients, especially adolescents, but the researcher questioned whether therapists had similar or conflicting attitudes concerning music’s effect on adolescent development. Therefore, this research was conducted in order to understand better what sort of therapeutic value is brought about through the use of popular music for adolescents.

The researcher constructed a survey, which was sent out to 132 music therapists selected from the AMTA (American Music Therapy Association) member source book under the clinical population heading Child/Adolescent Treatment Centers.

The researcher received 70 surveys, but only 63 were used, because the remaining subjects worked mainly with children and had little or no experience with adolescents. The results produced a great deal of information pertaining to music therapists’ beliefs about popular music’s influence on adolescent development. The responses were categorized into subject headings focusing on gender issues, adult socialization, developmental influences, lyric interpretation, and academic influence. The survey contained two open-ended questions, which asked the music therapists to state what their main concerns were with using popular music in the therapy session and what benefits they thought resulted from using popular music. The responses contained many similar
themes, which were categorized and analyzed by the researcher in order to detect trends in music therapists' attitudes, and beliefs. The literature was used as a source of referral, allowing the researcher to compare and contrast previous findings with current findings.

This study examined the relationship of popular music to adolescent development through the eyes of music therapists. Overall, it seemed that respondents shared many similar views in terms of the resulting benefits of using popular music with adolescents. However, certain areas of interest, such as song lyric interpretation, gender-specific issues in popular music, and music's influence on behavior and personality development seem to require further attention. This research not only provided a means for gathering and exploring a great deal of information about popular music and adolescent development, but it provided the framework for future areas of research.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. Their love and support mean the world to me. I don't think that I could have done this without them. Thank you for all of your continuous words of encouragement.
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I would like to thank all my friends who were there by my side through this little adventure. They helped to keep my spirits up in every way possible. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Paul Nolan, Dr. Beulah Hall, and Ron Hays, for being so supportive and guiding me in the right direction when I wasn’t sure of my way. All of your help was greatly appreciated. Lastly, thank you to all the music therapists who participated in my study. I appreciate how everyone took the time to fill out the survey and all of the many words of advice, and encouragement that I received.
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INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of research in the field of music and its effects on adolescents, but the relationship between adolescent development and popular music still remains questionable. Adolescents have been the focus of research due to overwhelming evidence that music listening increases dramatically during this period. According to Fischer and Powell (1985), it is estimated that between grades 7 and 12, teenagers spend 10,500 hours listening to rock music (Thompson, 1993). Studies have shown that primary music listening, that is, times when music listening is the main activity, occurs alone for 40% of the time in fifth and sixth grade and then jumps to 65% in seventh through ninth grade (Larson, 1995). Roe’s (1987) (as cited by Thompson, 1993) synthesis of research led to the following conclusion,

“more and more studies show that the whole adolescent milieu is penetrated at many levels by an active interest in music; that many adolescents employ it as a social lubricator; that a great deal of adolescent discourse centers around the language and terminology of rock; and that music provides the core values of numerous adolescent subcultures.”

Many of the studies focus on healthy, “normal” adolescents, but the role of music can take many different forms, affecting adolescents differently. Therefore, the question is posed whether there is a consensus among music therapists as to the potential effects of popular music on “normal” adolescents. This poses a delimitation to the study, because
the literature focuses on normal adolescent development whereas music therapists work mostly with those adolescents who are not necessarily developing normally. The expectation is that this study will clarify where music therapists agree or differ in opinions and beliefs concerning popular music’s effect on adolescent development. It is thought that music therapists may adopt this knowledge to better serve those clients who maintain faulty identification processes. This study is centered in the context of current Western culture with the assumption that these concerns pertaining to adolescents and popular music may not be universal. The purpose of this study is to survey music therapists in order to elicit information regarding their knowledge and beliefs concerning the role of popular music in adolescent development creating a clearer understanding of the relationship between popular music and adolescent identity.

Adults, in general, have been very concerned about the effects that music has on adolescents’ attitudes, values and behaviors. Popular music has been an important subject for claims and counter-claims about the moral and social order (Gray, 1989). In the fifties and sixties, claims against rock, whether they were sexual, racial, political, or drug-related, insisted that the music had harmful effects on young people’s morals and character. In their extreme form, these claims assumed that rock had hypnotic powers that young minds could not resist (Gray, 1989). In the 1980’s, claims against popular music stressed rock’s reliance on violence and sex, its role in the spread of harmful values, and the dangers it posed to helpless and potentially corruptible women and children. The major organized opposition to popular music was the Parents’ Music Resource Center (PMRC), which was organized in April, 1985, when the wives of several prominent politicians and government officials met to complain about the music
to which their children were exposed (Gray, 1989). By November 1985, the PMRC accepted the Recording Industry Association of America’s (RIAA) original offer to voluntarily use the label “Parental Guidance: Explicit Lyrics (Gray, 1989).

Is there reason for this continued concern? Or is music serving as a positive socialization agent during a period when a person has multiple and fragmented conceptions of who he or she is, and, concurrently, a time when responsibility for emotional self-regulation is being transferred from parent to child (Larson, 1995)? Adolescence is seen as a period of increased self-reflection with an emergence of a conscious distinction between one’s public and private selves: between the enacted me and the real me (Larson, 1995). In general, behavior at this age is a complex phenomenon that is highly dependent on the individual life history and on the milieu in which the adolescent grows up (Blos, 1978). The current “youth” or “peer cultures” are idiomatic expressions of adolescent needs (Blos, 1978). This research will focus around Erik Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial theory of human development, particularly his phase of adolescence, which he describes as ego identity versus role confusion. In this stage, one’s significant relations shift from the parents to peers and perceived leadership models. Erikson (1968) posited that in general, it is the inability to settle on an occupational identity that most disturbs young people. To keep themselves together they temporarily over-identify with the heroes of cliques and crowds to the point of an apparently complete loss of individuality (Erikson, 1968). During this period, adolescents search for “what is not me,” thereby increasing one’s individuation and establishing one’s sense of autonomy (Blos, 1978). The individuation process is accompanied by feelings of isolation, loneliness and confusion (Blos, 1978).
Little is known about listeners' conscious use of music and why adolescents find popular music so satisfying. Current research findings state that adolescents spend more time engaged with the media when they are alone than when they're with peers. For many adolescents, the bedroom becomes a personal sanctum (Larson, 1995). It is thought that music listening increases dramatically in adolescence, then, because it both speaks to adolescents' personal issues and helps them create a separate experiential space at home. Music is also important to adolescents because it helps define their public self outside the family (Larson, 1995). According to a study conducted by W. D. Blackburn (1983), adolescents' use of music can be categorized into eight major areas: relaxation, mood control, change of affect, stimulation, increase of affective responses, self understanding, socialization and aid with homework (Blackburn, 1983). There have been studies, such as Kurdek's research in 1987 (as cited by Larson, 1995), that suggest adolescents may use music as a coping strategy for dealing with stress (Larson, 1995). Some researchers find that young people generally use music to resist authority at all levels, assert their personalities, develop peer relationships and romantic entanglements, and learn about things that their parents and the schools aren't telling them (Lull, 1987).

Lull (1987) found that by concentrating on the lyrics, the listener might use music in special ways. People remember key lyrics—those that have special meaning to the self or to someone else who shares the "code" (Lull, 1987). Research conducted by Burke and Grinder (1966) (as cited by Thompson, 1993) concluded that teens use music "for a guide or framework for expressing their own feelings or an articulation of their own fantasies."
The objective of this study is to survey music therapists in order to develop a knowledge base pertaining to the attitudes and beliefs of practicing music therapists in regards to adolescent development and its relationship to popular music. The application of the findings to the music therapy body of knowledge will be to bridge the gaps of information pertaining to therapists’ knowledge of adolescents’ use of popular music in regards to identity formation. Since there is no clear strand for adolescent identification with music in the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) curriculum, this knowledge will benefit practicing music therapists, music therapy educators and clients, as well. Popular music is used fairly often in music therapy sessions with adolescents, mainly because it is known to invoke a variety of responses. However, it is important that music therapists are aware of their reasons for using popular music with adolescents, because stereotyped attitudes and personal biases concerning the role that music plays in the adolescent’s life can impact positively or negatively with the therapeutic process.
Adolescent Development

In the past, one would look at a person in terms of either being a child or an adult. The concept of adolescence was not identified as being an important and separate state of development. As times changed, so did social perceptions. There was a realization that childhood was being prolonged, and that the emergence of puberty was a significant stage in development that needed to be addressed. Certain changes, other than physical, were occurring that affected the person on the psychological and emotional level. Therefore, the term adolescence was derived to denote the psychological processes of adaptation to the condition of pubescence (Blos, 1978). Blos saw adolescence as a state where one is still considered a child, but requires containment of both the individual and the surrounding institutions to protect, rather than push, one into developing prematurely (Freed, 1990). According to Blos (1978), the physical changes of puberty create two significant psychological consequences involving a change of one’s body image, and a re-evaluation of the self in light of the new physical powers and sensations (Blos, 1978). There are many factors that aid in the change in perception of one’s body image. First, the individual’s own pattern of growth is not uniform throughout the body and so this asymmetrical growth often puts extreme demands upon the physical and mental adaptivity of the individual. Second, the physical changes are marked and visible, which
lead to an inevitable tendency to compare one's own bodily development with that of his peers (Blos, 1978).

Adolescence is seen as a turbulent time effecting many changes within the perceived family structure and concept of self. During this stage in one's life, peers become the primary focus of attention while family is secondary. With this shift in focus, many studies on self-esteem have shown a decline in the worth attributed to the self around the period of adolescence, suggesting that this emotional separation from parents is associated with weakened self-confidence (Larson, 1995). This is a particularly sensitive period for human development, because one does not have a stable internal sense of self. Aversive events appear to be more disruptive to adolescents and numerous studies show adolescence to be associated with increasing rates of depression, eating disorders, suicide, and delinquency (Larson, 1995). “Peer cultures” become idiomatic expressions of adolescent needs, attempting to transform a biological event such as puberty, into a psychosocial experience (Blos, 1978). Scholars associate the onset of adolescence in Western culture with a questioning, “softening” or fragmentation of the childhood self (Larson, 1995). Many psychoanalytic theorists such as Blos, and Anna Freud, feel that adolescence permits the remodeling of defective or incomplete earlier developments; a chance to solve conflicts or shift conflicts into a final direction (Blos, 1978). Other theorists such as Erikson, Piaget and Kegan, see adolescence not as a time to rework earlier themes of childhood, but as a unique stage of development with its own set of characteristics (Freed, 1990). Erikson has suggested we look at adolescence not as an affliction, but as a “normative” crisis, i.e. a normal phase of increased conflict characterized by a seeming fluctuation in ego strength, and yet also by a high growth
Although there are conflicting views concerning the role or function of adolescence, many agree that adolescence involves a second individuation process, the first one occurring at the end of one's second year of life when a distinction is experienced between 'self' and 'non-self'. An important function of adolescence is to be able to determine "what is not me" and achieve a sense of individuation and autonomy (Blos, 1978). In searching for what one is not, adolescents are desperately searching for "what is me," a search for one's identity. This struggle is accompanied by feelings of isolation, loneliness, and confusion (Blos, 1978).

Identification Process

The search for one's identity is a universal phenomenon during the adolescent years and for those who have faulty identification processes, the struggle becomes even more difficult. Although Erikson states that it is the inability to settle on an occupational identity that most disturbs young people, it is thought that teenagers are very concerned about who they are in terms of the overall self. This becomes the basis in forming cliques where adolescents stereotype themselves and others, their ideals, their enemies and insistently test each other's capacity for sustaining loyalties in the midst of inevitable conflicts of values (Erikson, 1968). These cliques become quite rigid in the rules and expectations of the members. There is a sense of belonging, which aids one's process of identification.

Schafer (1968) refers to identification as the process of modifying the subjective self or behavior, or both, in order to increase one's resemblance to an object taken as a model (Schafer, 1968). Bellak would define identification according to the process
where individuals mature through the emulation of others. Identification begins in infancy when the child’s first object relation is the mother. One’s identification with their parents centers in certain overvalued and ill-understood body parts, capacities and role appearances. These attributes are favored not because of their social acceptability, but by the nature of infantile fantasy, which only gradually gives way to more realistic judgment (Erikson, 1968). Not every identification endures; some are meant to be temporary. Those that do endure are founded on crucial early object relations and become one’s system-building identifications (Schafer, 1968). Although adolescence is the last stage of childhood, the adolescent process is only complete when the individual has subordinated his childhood identifications to a new kind of identification. This type of identification is achieved in absorbing sociability and in competitive apprenticeship with and among one’s age mates forcing the young individual into choices and decisions which will, with increasing immediacy, lead to commitments for life (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, identity formation is super-ordinated to any single identification with individuals of the past: it includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and reasonably coherent whole of them (Erikson, 1968).

Popular Music and its Implications on the Adolescent Culture

There have been many claims in the past and present that popular music provides a means for adolescents to rebel against society. It is thought that popular music is causally related to adolescents’ aggressive and/or destructive behavior, different value system and the adolescents’ overall way of life. Since its infancy in the 1950’s, rock music has frequently come under attack as being a significant contributor to adolescent
behavior problems (Epstein, 1990). Opponents of rock music have stated that rock music often presents opinions, attitudes, values and lifestyles, which are contrary to existing adult standards for teenage behavior (Epstein, 1990). As Herman Gray states, “conflicts over popular music involve groups who disagree about appropriate habits, tastes, values and behavior” (Gray, 1989). There are conflicting views concerning the matter of popular music and its relation to the adolescent culture. One view is that the involvement with popular music leads to decisions to commit acts of violence and other destructive behavior, values and attitudes. The other argument is that popular music does not attempt to change attitudes and values, it simply reinforces what already exists. From this perspective, popular music re-creates and affirms teenage behavior, it does not cause or create it (Epstein, 1990).

The combined presence of the television, radio and automobile represented a shift in the ways people experience leisure and entertainment. During this time of change, consequently, young people became an attractive economic market with distinctive habits, tastes and practices. Simultaneously, young people began to exercise greater independence and control over their leisure, entertainment, social life and tastes (Gray, 1989). Music has become a means of expression for youths, but also a reflection of the current times. Some researchers have suggested that the content of popular music and television programming reflects the interests and concerns of adolescents, whereas others suggest the opposite. They feel that popular music plays a more active role in adolescence, that of actually shaping or influencing young listeners leading them to question established behavior patterns, values, and ideas (Greeson, 1986). Epstein, a professor in the department of sociology and anthropology at Kent State University,
states that it is easier for rock music opponents to address the issue of violence present in those musical genres, such as heavy metal, rap, and other popular forms of music, than to address the basis of the rage and violence (Epstein, 1990). There are many incidences where popular music has been accused of causing destructive behavior. These include the court case in 1990 where it was argued that the suicide of a Nevada youth was the result of his listening to excessive amounts of the British heavy metal band, Judas Priest. Gore and Baker (1989) (as cited in Epstein, 1990) asserted that the involvement with rap music contributed to an attack on a jogger in New York’s Central Park by a group of inner-city youths. Their claims against rap music seemed to gain more validity when in Greensboro, North Carolina, a shooting incident occurred in a housing project by youths whose rifles were found to have the initials of the rap band, NWA, “Niggers with Attitude” carved on the rifle stock. Claims against rock, whether they were sexual, racial, political, or drug-related, insisted that the music had harmful effects on young people’s morals and character. In their extreme form, these claims assumed that rock had hypnotic powers that young minds could not resist (Gray, 1989). Society’s concern over popular music and its potential harmful effects on youth have lingered for quite some time. In the 1950’s, claims against popular music stressed rock’s reliance on violence and sex, its role in the spread of harmful values, and the dangers it posed to helpless and potentially corruptible women and children. The Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) was successful in their attempts to label those albums whose lyrics contained derogatory and offensive language (Gray, 1989). It is difficult, though, to say whether or not this intervention served its purpose. Profits for those records issued with warning labels actually increased due to curiosity and human nature. That which is warned against
becomes the object of one’s desire. Creating labels that indicate those records, whose lyrics are offensive to adults and to society at large, sparks interest in its listeners and therefore, unknowingly urges others to buy the records.

Another matter linked to the idea of offensive lyrics is the idea behind the relevance of song lyrics and the question as to whether or not the meaning of lyrics is understood by the majority of youth. Iverson, Reed and Revlin (1989), psychology department at University of California, realized that recently strong, but weakly documented claims have been made concerning the influence of “objectionable” song lyrics on the behavior of adolescents, including assaults on women and suicides. Research by Iverson, et al. has found that although it has been shown that placing words in the context of music makes them more memorable, it does not necessarily make such lyrics more meaningful (Iverson, et al, 1989). Due to the limited empirical data available to evaluate whether the musical presentation of messages increases their acceptability, Iverson et al. provided a preliminary, laboratory investigation of the matter. The experiment randomly assigned subjects to one of two conditions: music or non-music. Twenty excerpts of popular music were either presented in the original, musical context or presented in written form. The subjects in this study involve young people who have recently “survived” adolescence- college students between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Their task was to rate each excerpt in terms of personal relevance ranging from “low”, “moderate” to “high” meaningfulness. The proposed hypothesis was that all students should evaluate the lyrics in the musical context more highly than when they are not accompanied by music (Iverson, et al., 1989). Research found that male students were “distracted” by the presence of music while performing their evaluations as opposed to
females who seemed to integrate the music and lyrics more jointly in order to convey a “mood” (Iverson, et al., 1989). Hirsch (as cited by Freed, 1990) conducted a study where the subjects were college students (post-adolescence) listening to sixties protest songs. He found that 70 percent of the college students chose sound over being attracted to a song’s meaning and discovered that students found lyrics “confusing” or “ambiguous” and in general, were unaware of many lyrics and their so-called ‘deviant’ messages (Freed, 1990).

There is the question of whether adolescents with adjustment problems and/or adolescents in general, cope more effectively with their troubles by using rock music or whether their exposure to this material aggravates their condition (Blackburn, 1983)? Toohey (as cited by Blackburn, 1983) asserts that lyrics in pop music could contribute to an adolescent’s personality development and Mashkin and Volgy (1975) (as cited by Blackburn, 1983) state,

“on the basis of our data, we do suspect that prolonged exposure to the lyrical content of music has some definite reinforcing, or acquisitive consequence. Assuming the rejection of many of the conventional agents of socialization on the part of many college students, we would argue that even the reinforcing function of music should be highly salient for students’ growth and development” (Blackburn, 1983).

The fact is, researchers have different opinions in the matter of popular music and its relationship to adolescents’ development. There seems to be a fear that music, in its overall form, is more influential to adolescents’ behavior and value system than the family unit, and this influence is viewed as negative. Is there really cause for such concern? Does music really have the potential to influence young minds and if this is the
case, how healthy is this influence? This study examines the views of music therapists concerning these matters.

Adolescents' Search for Identity

There has been a lot of research that focuses on adolescents' emotional and social uses of popular music mainly because music listening seems to increase dramatically in the adolescent years and its use becomes quite private. For many adolescents, the bedroom becomes a personal sanctum. Music listening increases, because it both speaks to adolescents' personal issues and helps them create a separate experiential space at home (Larson, 1995). Adolescents, who are engaged in a search to “find” themselves, seem to identify with particular aspects of popular music. Uses of popular music range from enhancing one’s mood, to relaxation, to socialization or to understanding oneself better. Lull and Lindoff (1985) (as cited by Freed, 1990) concurred that adolescents find relief from parents, teachers and authority figures in rock music. Lindoff added that music plays a key role in the process of adolescent differentiation from parents and towards the peer group. Music often becomes the focus of the adolescent identity search and music preference serves to “define cultural generations as well as subgroups within youth culture.” George Lewis reports that we pretty much listen to, and enjoy, the same music listened to by other people we like or identify with. He also states that young people have frequently identified with certain singers, used popular music as a conversational resource, and, by predicting which songs would become hits and knowing musical trivia, have created and established their positions within the peer group (Lewis, 1987).
W. Ray Crozier makes a distinction between one’s personal identity, which involves one’s unique qualities, values, and attributes versus one’s social identity which refers to the social categories to which people belong, aspire to belong, or share important values with. The personal identity is then examined through either the private self, that which only you know, such as your desires, aspirations and personal beliefs and the public self, which refers to the person you present to others, the enacted self, the you that others know (Crozier, 1997). Adolescents’ use of music can guide them through all of these searches, but music’s overt influence lies in the social realm. Larson (as cited by Crozier, 1997) suggests that music relates to social identity in that it provides the security of identification with other like-minded peers. An apparent need for expressing affiliation and belonging, on the one hand, and indifference or defiance, on the other, characterizes adolescent behavior in connection with their musical preferences (Zillman and Gan, 1997). Frith (1981) (as cited by Zillman and Gan, 1997) states “all adolescents use music as a badge,” namely as a badge of distinction.

**Popular Music Serving as a Socialization Agent**

Zillman and Gan have also found that music, as a cultural product, can serve as the defining, central condition in the formation of interactive groups, which led to the idea of competing culture classes, tastes, cultures, or youth cultures that are rather independent of social-class standing. Musical preferences seem to bring adolescents together, often despite pronounced differences in social-class standing (Zillman and Gan, 1997). Music is, therefore, looked at as a unifying factor in adolescents’ lives and serves as a topic of discussion, promoting group cohesion and/or self-expression. Reed Larson
(1995) proposes that identification with a musical subculture is a means of establishing solidarity with a peer group and can be a way of articulating one’s relationship to school (Larson, 1995). Once a group that focuses on a particular musical genre is formed, its members benefit in at least two ways. They have defined themselves as members of a cultural elite (in their own perception), and attain the emotional gratification of belonging and they have defined themselves as distinct and different from other peer groups and attain gratification of being somehow superior (in their own perception) (Zillman and Gan, 1997). Adolescents carry with them their particular life histories, as well as the knowledge of their peer cultures, and it is with this embodied knowledge that they build on and transform the shared socio-cultural knowledge available through the media. Teens’ sense of who they are shapes their encounters with the media, and those encounters, in turn, shape their sense of themselves in the ongoing process of cultural production and reproduction (Steele and Brown, 1995). Society has frequently looked at the latter as a cause and effect relationship, with music listening causing various personality formations, but according to Steele and Brown, both are seen as influential components, each affecting the other. Aside from being a badge of distinction for youth, society also often questions the motivations of adolescents for listening to certain types of music.

Possible Motives for Listening to Popular Music

According to the literature, music can be utilized for various purposes, with either a conscious or unconscious motive. Aside from the fact that music serves as a socialization agent among peer groups creating a sense of belonging and acceptance,
popular music has been regarded as a vehicle for self-exploration, mood control, relaxation, self-awareness and understanding, stress relief, etc. In a study by Kurdek (1987) (as cited by Larson, 1995), adolescents identified music listening as their most frequently used coping strategy for dealing with stress while according to Larson (1995), adolescents use music listening to directly engage with issues of identity. It is thought that the images and emotions of popular music allow one to feel a range of internal states and try on alternate identities, both desired and feared (Larson, 1995). Burke and Grinder (1966) (as cited by Thompson, 1993) concluded that teens use music “for a guide or framework for expressing their own feelings or an articulation of their own fantasies.” In a study by William Blackburn, the relationship of self-concept to adolescent’s musical preferences and level of involvement with music listening was explored. Relaxation was regarded as the most frequent motive for listening to popular music. Other responses included comments referring to music’s ability to improve one’s mood, its “power” in making one feel “good” or “happy”, the stimularion [sic] value of music, music’s capacity to evoke certain emotions and affective responses, increased self-understanding through song lyrics, socialization and how interest in music can improve friendships and peer relations, and the use of music with homework (Blackburn, 1983).

The literature seems to draw certain distinctions and commonalities among gender relationships to popular music and its use. According to a study by Christenson & Roberts (as cited by Thompson, 1993), females tended to listen to music more than males do. Larson et al. (1989) (as cited by Thompson, 1993) offered the opinion that "males appear to use music to pump themselves up, whereas for adolescent females, the use of music may be driven more by a need to both explore and cope with new
concerns and worries that accompany this age period.”

Crowther and Durkin (1982) (as cited by O’Neill, 1997) administered questionnaires to 12-18 year olds measuring attitudes toward music. They found that although positive attitudes toward music increased with age for both sexes, females reported more positive attitudes toward music than males did at all ages and they also rated listening to music more favorably than males (O’Neill, 1997). Frith (1981) (as cited by Zillman & Gan, 1997) saw fit to generalize that female adolescents, compared to male adolescents, are more strongly drawn to soft, danceable music and pay more attention to lyrics, especially those pertaining to romance. Wells and Hakanen (1991) observed that female high-school students were more emotionally responsive to popular music at large than were male students, and that these female students used music more directly for the purpose of mood enhancement (Zillman and Gan, 1997). Wells and Hakanen (1991) asked college students, post-adolescence, to identify the emotions that they most associated with their favorite songs and found out that “contrary to the ‘non-emotional’ stereotype of males, they do in fact exhibit strong emotional use of music (p. 448).” In the latter study, females seemed to choose songs that express hope, happiness, passion and grief slightly more than men whereas men were more likely to choose excitement, delight, anger and hate. Both males and females commonly associated songs with current or past loves indicating that music seems to be a major link of biography and nostalgia (Wells and Hakanen, 1991). This study showed a high percentage of both males and females claiming to use music to change a mood, but the most common for both genders was combating depression or being upset. In another study, women were viewed as using
music for mood management significantly more than men except to “get pumped up”, which was the most popular choice for males.

Many studies, therefore, imply some link between music use and the managing of mood. This link is mostly seen when music is used as stimulant, and less frequent, but clearly established, when music is used as a tranquilizer (Wells and Hakanen, 1991). Wells and Hakanen performed a study in a small, northeastern city school where high school students were asked to rate each of the following emotions on a progressive scale (0-9), indicating how they felt when they listened to their favorite type of music. These emotions were: love, hope, fear, pride, grief, anger, sadness, passion, delight, happiness, excitement, and confidence. Emotion ratings varied significantly by gender in that women tended to associate emotions with music more than men do. The only emotions rated higher by men than by women were confidence, anger and pride (Wells and Hakanen, 1991).

The literature findings reveal the multifaceted nature of the topic in that there are many avenues to travel. The relevant issues for this study will include a focus on popular music’s effect on gender, socialization processes, developmental processes, and the relevance of song lyrics for normal developing adolescents. The literature contains a wide range of findings, which seems to allude to the fact that the relationship between popular music and adolescent development is in need of further research. This study’s intent is to examine the attitudes of music therapists towards popular music and its effect on the above named processes.
METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Design

This study, a survey, was designed to gather information pertaining to music therapists' views on popular music and its relation to adolescent development. A survey (Appendix) was designed by the researcher for collection of data. The survey included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and its relevance to the field of music therapy.

The survey questions were developed through a review of the literature on adolescence and popular music. The survey was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of questions referring to the subject's demographic information. This is important when attempting to discover strong correlation or trends in the subject's background/history with the manner in which they answered the questions. The second section consisted of statements reflecting documented attitudes, beliefs and possible misconceptions regarding adolescents and their relationship with popular music. The second part of the survey was a questionnaire consisting of 31 statements concerning the role of music with adolescents. Respondents were requested to register their opinions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The subjects were to check off the column, which correlated with their response. The third section consisted of two open-ended questions, which allowed the researcher to view the information concerning the subjects' views on the influence of popular music on
adolescents in a qualitative manner. There was also additional space provided for any comments pertaining to the survey.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were music therapists listed in the 1999 AMTA (American Music Therapy Association) member source book working in Child/Adolescent Treatment Centers. This list included 174 music therapists, but only 132 music therapists were sent the survey due to the researcher's decision to mail surveys to only those subjects residing in the United States. This list did not differentiate between music therapists working with children and those working with adolescents; however, the survey only included those music therapists working mainly with adolescents. Out of the 132 surveys sent, 70 were received and 63 were used for data collection.

Procedure

The survey was developed in January 2000 and sent to music therapists in February 2000. It was sent along with a cover letter and a self-addressed and pre-stamped return envelope. The cover letter requested that the subjects send the result by February 14, 2000 in order to allow a sufficient amount of time for the analyzing of data.

The demographic data from each survey was compiled into a list, which allowed the researcher to organize the subjects in a systematic manner and identify whether the sample was more heterogeneous or homogeneous in relation to the subjects' personal traits/characteristics. Each survey item was then categorized into a specific focal area of popular music's influence. This was done in order to detect similarities/trends regarding
the influence of popular music on adolescents. The categories included; influence of
gender in relation to both listener and singer, music’s influence on adolescents’
socialization to adult culture, influence of popular music on developmental tasks, the
meaning of lyrics, and academic performance in relation to music listening. There were
two open-ended questions that were posed at the end of the survey in regards to music
therapists’ perceptions about using popular music in therapy. The subjects were asked to
state what their concerns are in using popular music in therapy and what the perceived
benefits are from using it. This gave the researcher a qualitative outlook, which added a
personal feel to the research as well as a view into the therapeutic realm of music with
adolescents. A content analysis was therefore needed in order to structure the qualitative
data. Lastly, the researcher attempted to interpret the results in order to form some
hypotheses as to music therapists’ attitudes concerning popular music and normal
adolescent development. From this research, suggestions can be made on what areas
need to be addressed in the education of music therapists regarding adolescent
development and the significance of popular music.
RESULTS

The main objective of this study was to survey music therapists in order to develop a knowledge base of the beliefs, and knowledge of practicing music therapists regarding adolescent development and its relationship to popular music. The researcher developed a survey after reviewing the literature supporting or negating the influence of popular music on adolescents in Western culture. This survey's purpose was to detect whether practicing music therapists' views agree with the current literature and/or whether there are differences in opinion within the sample.

The results of the survey are organized into two sections. The first section contains responses to the 31 survey items, which have been categorized in order to clarify the different ways in which popular music may influence adolescents. The six categories analyze data in terms of (1) a description subject demographics, including information pertaining to education, gender, age, music preference, adolescent-aged children, current job title, years employed as a music therapist, years employed with adolescents in music therapy, percentage of their work with adolescents, and problems with which their patients have presented, (2) subjects' beliefs concerning the influence of gender, both listener and singer, on musical preference, (3) beliefs on popular music's influence on adolescents' socialization to adult culture, (4) beliefs concerning popular music's influence on adolescents' developmental tasks, (5) beliefs about the meaning of lyrics, and (6) beliefs concerning popular music's influence on adolescents' academic
performance. The second section of the results contains a content analysis of the subjects' responses to the two open-ended questions. These questions provide general impressions regarding music therapists' concerns about the use of popular music as well as the benefits to using it in therapy.

Demographic Information of Respondents

The survey was sent to 132 music therapists in the United States who were listed in the 1999 AMTA (American Music Therapy Association) member source book under those working in Child/Adolescent Treatment Centers. Of those 132 surveys, 70 were returned (a 52.6% return rate), but only 63 surveys were able to be analyzed due to the fact that some subjects only worked with children.

The respondents included 7 males and 56 females indicating the prevalence of females in this field. The age range varied with subjects from each age bracket, but of the 63 respondents, 28 (44%) were in the age range of 31-40 (see Figure 1).

Age range of respondents

![Age range of respondents](image)

**Figure 1.** The age range of subjects participating in the study.
The educational background of the respondents varied in that most of the subjects pursued degrees in areas other than music therapy. It should be noted that many of the subjects indicated more than one degree. Of the 63 subjects, 33 (52.4%) had a bachelors degree in music therapy and 15 (23.8%) had a masters degree in music therapy.

Table 1.
A List of the Educational Background of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor Degree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Masters Degree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Advanced graduate degree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music Therapy</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Music Therapy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Music Therapy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NRMT (Nordoff &amp; Robbins)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Level 1 GIM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Business &amp; Technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Healthcare Administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M.T. Equivalency</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Piano</td>
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<td>Music Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical Psychology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>Musicology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family and Child Development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
n= number of respondents

Music preference varied as well. Respondents were asked to indicate which genres of music were of interest to them. This, in turn, allowed each respondent to pick more than one category if they so choose. The majority of subjects claimed to hold
preference in the areas of Pop Rock (44%; 26 respondents), Classic Rock (44%; 26 respondents), Classical (62%; 39 respondents), and Jazz (43%; 27 respondents). Styles identified less frequently were heavy metal (1.6%, 1 respondent), rap (0%), blues (9.5%, 6 respondents), country (22.2%, 14 respondents), alternative (30.2%, 19 respondents), and R&B (23.8%, 15 respondents). In addition, subjects were able to indicate music styles not listed. The following areas of musical preference were listed under the "Other" category: Folk (6%), Christian (2%), Gospel (2%), Chant (2%), and Celtic (1%).

![Music preference of subjects](image)

Figure 2. Respondents' musical preference.

Out of the 63 subjects, 13 (20.6%) currently have children between the ages of 12 and 18. Subjects' current job titles were listed under a variety of names, ranging from music therapist, music psychotherapist, administrative clinical director, music therapy
rehabilitative specialist, to special education teacher, coordinator of creative arts therapy, piano teacher, service coordinator, recreation coordinator, prevention educator and creative arts specialist.

Music therapists were asked to indicate their years employed as a music therapist. The majority of subjects were placed in the 0-5 years bracket.

Figure 3. Number of years subjects have been employed as a music therapist.

Figure 4. Number of years subjects have worked with adolescents in music therapy.
The subjects were asked to indicate what percentage of their work is with adolescents, but the numbers varied across the board. Out of the 63 respondents, only 55 subjects answered this question so therefore, a complete representation was not acquired.

**Percentage of work with adolescents**

![Bar chart showing percentage of work with adolescents](image)

**Figure 5.** The percentage of time spent working with adolescent clients.

Lastly, music therapists were asked to indicate which problems their clients presented in therapy and the frequency with which they would rate these occurrences. The categories given, (depression, anxiety, anger, suicide, fear, mania, issues of loss, issues of death, self-esteem, sense of self and isolation), were mentioned throughout the
literature as symptoms or issues that one may face in the adolescent years. In response to the literature, music therapists were asked to state their opinions as to how frequent these symptoms/ issues arose in therapy by either marking often, sometimes, rarely or never. According to the respondents, the most often faced problems in therapy were depression (69.8%; 44 respondents), anxiety (55.5%; 35 respondents), anger (79.4%; 50 respondents), self-esteem issues (76.2%; 48 respondents), and issues surrounding one’s sense of self (62%; 39 respondents).

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music Therapists’ Views as to the Clinical Problems Adolescent Clients Face</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
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<td>Suicide</td>
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<td>Fear</td>
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<td>Mania</td>
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<td>Issues of loss</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues of death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of self</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Influence of Gender on Musical Preference

This section consists of ten survey statements (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, 21, 26, and 28) related to how music therapists perceive the significance of gender in relation to adolescents’ involvement with popular music. The respondent was given a choice of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “No Opinion,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree,” for
each statement and asked to check their best answer. The data will be reported in terms of the frequency with which the majority of subjects responded.

Item 1 states that the gender of the performer influences one's listening experience. The majority of subjects (68.2%) agreed (55.5% agreed, 12.7% strongly agreed) with this statement, whereas 15.9% disagreed (14.3% disagreed, 1.6% strongly disagreed).

Item 2 asked subjects to indicate whether or not the gender of the listener, in this case male, was affected differently in terms of relevance of music. Item 2 states that the gender of the performer influences males' listening experience more than females. More subjects (44.4%) disagreed with this statement (41.3% disagreed, 3.2% strongly disagreed) whereas 23 (36.5%) agreed (23.8% agreed, 12.7 strongly agreed).

Item 3 reverses statement 2 indicating whether or not females are affected differently when listening to popular music. Item 3 states that the gender of the performer influences females' listening experience more than males. Subjects seemed to have similar views in relation to the previous with 29 (46.0%) music therapists disagreeing (42.9% disagreed, 3.2% strongly disagreed) and 17 (27.0%) agreeing (22.2% agreed, 4.8% strongly agreed), but a sufficient amount of subjects (27.0%; 17 respondents) had no opinion concerning this topic.

Item 4 states that males, in contrast to females, attend primarily to the musical qualities in a song as opposed to the content of lyrics. The majority of respondents (65.0%) disagreed with this statement (60.3% disagreed, 4.8 strongly disagreed) and only 27.0% subjects agreed (23.8% agreed, 3.2% strongly agreed).
Item 5 states that females listen to music more frequently than males. A significant amount (80.6%) of responses disagreed (74.2% disagreed, 6.5% strongly disagreed) with only 8 (12.9%) agreeing with the statement.

Item 17 makes the distinction that females report more positive attitudes toward music than males do at all ages. Many music therapists had no opinion on this matter (34.9%; 22 respondents), but the majority of respondents (54.0%) disagreed (38.1% disagreed, 15.9 strongly disagreed). Only 7 (11.1%) agreed with the statement.

Item 18 states that music is regarded as a feminine subject and is therefore far more likely to attract, and be valued by, females than males. All of the respondents, with the exception of 2 who agreed and 4 with no opinion, disagreed with this statement. Responses tallied 35 subjects (55.6%) who disagreed and 22 (34.9%) who strongly disagreed.

Item 21 declares that the gender of the listener is an important factor in regards to music's influence on behavior. The majority of responses (46.0%) disagreed (39.7% disagreed, 6.3 strongly disagreed), and 15 (23.8%) agreed (19.0% agreed, 4.8 strongly agreed).

Item 26 states that males exhibit strong emotional uses of music, which was overall, supported by the majority. Responses tallied 40 (64.5%) subjects who agree (59.7% agreed, 4.8% strongly agreed), and 10 (16.1%) who disagree.

Item 28 states that lyrics are more meaningful to females as opposed to reading the words in the absence of music. The majority (48.3%) concurred (43.3% agreed, 5.0% strongly agreed), but 19 (31.7%) had no opinion and 12 (20.0%) disagreed.
The Influence of Popular Music on Adolescents' Socialization to Adult Culture

This section consists of 6 survey statements (items 6, 12, 14, 15, 20, and 30) providing an outlook as to how music therapists perceive popular music’s influence on adolescents’ beliefs, values, ideals, and its influence on their conformity to adult culture. This section will follow the same format previously stated using the choices of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “No Opinion,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree,” reporting options with the highest frequency.

Item 6 states that lyrics serve as powerful agents of communication and therefore its messages can pose a threat to society. Almost half of the respondents (54.0%) agreed with this statement (47.6 agreed, 6.3 strongly agreed) and (31.7%) disagreed (28.6% disagreed, 4.8% strongly disagreed).

Item 12 makes the generalization that popular music is a reflection of society’s values, beliefs, and current culture, which was supported by 51 (82.2%) music therapists (62.9% agreed, 19.4% strongly agreed). The statement only raised objection from 4 subjects (6.5% disagreed).

Item 14 is a contrast of item 12 stating popular music shapes and influences young listeners leading them to question established behavior patterns, values and ideals. The majority of responses (62.0%) agreed with this statement as well (54.0 agreed, 7.9% strongly agreed), and 13 (20.6%) disagreed (19.0% disagreed, 1.6% strongly disagreed).

Item 15 proposes the idea that prolonged exposure to the lyrical content of music has some negative reinforcing consequences. Over half of the respondents agreed (58.7%) with the statement (52.4% agreed, 6.3% strongly agreed), and 10 (15.9%) disagreed.
Item 20 declares that adolescents are attracted to music that expresses defiance of established social conventions. The majority of music therapists (51.6%) agreed (45.2% agreed, 6.5% strongly agreed), and 21.0% disagreed (19.4% disagreed, 1.6% strongly disagreed).

Item 30 states that music is a vehicle for teaching teenagers about the norms and rules of society, which was supported by the majority (74.1%) of music therapists (62.9% agreed, 11.3% strongly agreed). In addition, 8 music therapists (12.9%) had no opinion as well as 8 who disagreed with this statement.

**Popular Music’s Influence on Developmental Tasks**

This section consists of 10 survey statements (items 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 19, 24, 25, 27, and 29) analyzing music therapists’ beliefs surrounding popular music’s influence on developmental tasks, such as identity formation, and socialization skills. Data will be recorded in a similar fashion with a focus on the frequency in which subjects rated their responses.

Item 7 states that adolescents use music listening as their most frequently used coping strategy for dealing with stress. The majority of responses (77.7%) agreed with this belief (58.7% agreed, 19.0% strongly agreed) whereas only 9.5% disagreed.

Item 8 states that music is a way for adolescents to assume various identities and feel a range of internal states. In other words, music allows adolescents to experiment with who they are. With the exception of 1 subject, 98.4% of the responses concurred with this statement. Responses tallied 23 (36.5%) respondents who strongly agree and 39 (61.9%) who agree.
Item 10 poses the idea that music provides a positive feeling about group membership, which was supported by the majority of respondents (73.0%). The most frequent response pertained to those who agree (49.2) with the rest (23.8%) in strong agreement. There were only 4 (6.3%) who disagreed and 1 (1.6%) who strongly disagreed.

Item 11 states that one's identification with lyrics could influence one's personality development. The bulk of the consensus was in agreement (75.4%) with that particular belief (62.3 agreed, 13.1 strongly agreed). Those who disagreed tallied to 8.2% with no one in strong disagreement.

Item 16 states that music functions as a socialization agent allowing one to improve peer relations and gain a better understanding of one's identity. The majority of respondents (83.6%) agreed (65.6% agreed, 18.0% strongly agreed) and 4.9% disagreed.

Item 19 posits that adolescents use music as a symbol or a “badge” of distinction/identity. The majority (87.3%) agreed with this statement as well (61.9% agreed, 25.4% strongly agreed) and 4.8% disagreed.

Item 24 states that adolescents' sense of self is shaped by their encounters with music, which was more supported than not (64.5%) with 59.7% in agreement and 4.8% in strong agreement. Those who were in disagreement included 14.5% in disagreement and 1.6 in strong disagreement.

Item 25 states that one's selection of music is conscious and is motivated by the need to learn something or to maintain a mood. The majority of music therapists (54.8%) agreed (48.4% agreed, 6.5% strongly agreed), and those who disagreed tallied 29.0% with 1.6% in strong disagreement.
Item 27 posits that adolescents commonly associate songs with current or past girlfriends/boyfriends. This statement was supported by the majority (79.0%) with 39 (62.9%) who agreed and 10 (16.1%) who strongly agreed. There were only 6 (9.7%) subjects who disagreed and no one in strong disagreement.

Item 29 states that music listening provides a context for self-exploration, which was also supported by the majority. The results tallied 59 (95.1%) music therapists in accordance (67.7% agreed, 27.4% strongly agreed) and 1 (1.6%) in disagreement.

Meaning / Influence of Lyrics

This section consists of 3 survey statements (items 9, 13, and 31) that examine music therapists' beliefs concerning song lyrics and their relevance in adolescents' lives. Data analysis will be consistent with that from the previous sections.

Item 9 states that adolescents can comprehend the meaning in the majority of song lyrics. Almost half of the respondents (66.6%) agreed with this statement (49.2% agreed, 17.5% strongly agreed), and 13 (20.6%) disagreed.

Item 13 declares that adolescents interpret song lyrics very similarly and therefore can grasp the "messages" that musicians send out. This topic has been quite controversial in the past and therefore it is not surprising that responses were distributed somewhat evenly across the range. There was an equal amount of responses that strongly agreed and strongly disagreed (4.8%), with 22 (34.9%) respondents who agreed, and 27 (42.9) who disagreed.

Item 31 was concerned with whether or not the sound or beat of music is more important in determining preference for a particular piece of music than are lyrics. Half
of the respondents (50%) agreed that the sound or beat is more important (40.3% agreed, 9.7% strongly agreed) whereas 19 (30.6%) disagreed with the statement (29.0% disagreed, 1.6% strongly disagreed).

Popular Music’s Influence on Academic Performance

This section consists of 2 survey statements (items 22 and 23) and it deals with popular music’s influence on academic performance and what beliefs music therapists have concerning this topic. Again, data will be analyzed by the same format previously used.

Item 22 states that adolescents’ academic successes or failures shape their musical taste. The dissenting views were of the majority (69.3%) with 33 (53.2%) music therapists disagreeing and 10 (16.1%) strongly disagreeing. Those in agreement tallied 14.5% with 12.9% in agreement and 1.6% in strong agreement with this statement.

Item 23 states that adolescents’ musical tastes affect one’s performance in school. Similar to the previous statement, the consensus disputed this belief. The results tallied 71.0% music therapists who were in disagreement (58.1% disagreed, 12.9% strongly disagreed), and 6 (9.7%) who were in agreement (8.1% agreed, 1.6% strongly agreed).

Music Therapists’ Concerns with Popular Music

Music therapists were given a chance to explain what they thought were the concerns when using popular music in a therapeutic setting. The question was stated, “What have you found, as a music therapist, to be the biggest concern in using popular music with adolescent clients?” There were a variety of answers that the researcher placed into five
categories that were thought to reflect and structure the similarities from the responses. The categories consist of (1) concerns about the profanity and sexual and/or violent content that is so prevalent in today's popular music, (2) using the music as a positive growth-producing agent, (3) concerns as to the resistance or closed-mindedness of adolescents and their tastes in music, (4) over-stimulation and lack of awareness in terms of self and music, and (5) resistance from administrators, and parents. Many of the statements are taken directly from the respondents' answers and written in such a way that clearly states what the respondents' messages and concerns were. It was thought that the music therapists stated their concerns best and therefore should be transcribed in the exact manner unless clarification is required.

*Concerns about the use of profanity, and violent and/or sexual content in popular music*

This category seemed to be of the utmost concern to music therapists and it was expressed quite frequently. One music therapist was concerned about the use of gangster rap, or other rap with obscenities, because they worried as to whether listening to it would reinforce bad attitudes. This music therapist in particular, felt that it is better for adolescents to listen with a therapist than alone or with peer so that they have the opportunity to discuss the lyrics. Another music therapist had similar views and stated that music used with controversial lyrics always needs to be discussed in order to help the clients clarify their thoughts and feelings. Music therapists noted that many songs promote violence, drugs, excessive sexuality and disrespect, which poses much concern when using it in therapy sessions. One music therapist stated that the inappropriate language and suggestions as well as violence limit the choices of available music.
Another worried that they might add to the negative influence if the music is used in therapy sessions. On those same lines, another music therapist felt that music that promotes negative social behavior is difficult to use therapeutically as it is generally glorified by students instead of being realistically analyzed for therapeutic change of behavior. There seems to some difficulty between finding popular music that is relevant to their issues while being appropriate and not supporting violence, drugs, and sexual promiscuity.

*Using the music as a growth-producing agent*

Many music therapists seem to have concerns about creating a positive therapeutic setting around the use of popular music. Some music therapists mentioned that it is difficult to re-create popular music live and therefore, therapists worry about being able to provide a music-making experience that is in step with the clients' musical tastes. One respondent stated that the type of music used in therapy affects adolescents' attention to the music, which also needs to be considered. Another problem in re-creating popular music in therapy is the difficulty in understanding the lyrics and therefore, misinterpretation of the lyrics occurs. Many music therapists had different ideas in terms of using music as a positive growth-producing agent. One was concerned about inadvertently exposing sensitive individuals to harsh music causing them additional anxiety rather than the intended positive feelings. Another music therapist realizes that therapists must be able to use the negativity of such music in a way that promotes positive growth. There are concerns as to how to use popular songs, especially rap, that contains harsh language in a positive therapeutic setting, especially if the group includes
younger children or parents. Lastly, it is known that every client has his/her own preference, but in group work, musical selection of popular music is often a divider or vehicle for highly volatile adolescents to classify each other and form cliques based on music preference. When using popular music in groups, one runs the risk of separating group members into sub-groups based on musical preference with the dominant music culture providing a rally point for inclusion/exclusion. This is based on expressed music preferences, which leads to reluctance from adolescents to share their true preferences.

Resistance from adolescents in regards to music preference

Many music therapists voiced concerns pertaining to the rigidity and low tolerance of adolescents in terms of their music listening. One respondent stated that many times an adolescent’s identity is so firmly ingrained with a particular singer or group that any challenge of this state is met with great resistance. This is where music therapy education helps one make the resistance a useful tool by challenging those thoughts related to the resistance and working with it therapeutically. It was also stated that it can be difficult to introduce a new style/genre of music to a teen if it has not formerly been a part of their social domain, which is manifested in initial reluctance and rigidity as stated above. Adolescents want to listen to their preferred music and seem to have a difficult time in expanding their minds to different sounds. One music therapist saw this closed-minded attitude as translating into little tolerance for people who listen to different music styles, and to take it a step farther, little tolerance for those people who are different in general. Although popular music can ignite certain attitudes from adolescents, music therapists seem to use this genre of music more with this generation,
because of its ability to tap into adolescents' feelings and psyche. It appears that the positive outcomes from using popular music in a therapeutic environment seem to outweigh the negative concerns surrounding this issue.

Concerns pertaining to over-stimulation and clients' lack of awareness

Music therapists have found that occasionally, adolescents become over-stimulated when listening to certain types of popular music. The music seems to provoke emotions and reactions that are more than they can control. Graphic, violent lyrics were noted as being the precipitant to over-stimulation in some adolescents, males in particular. Music therapists felt that using popular music can lead to an increase in anger and violence and that adolescents seem to choose songs with messages of self-destruction and identify with violence, suicide, rage, female abuse, and anger. There is concern for teens who listen to music that contains lyrics encouraging violence, racism, sexual misconduct and illegal activities, because those teens seem to be unwilling to see the negative impact this has on them. Adolescents seem to be oblivious at times to the consequences of their behavior and don't recognize the potential violence some lyrics suggest. This lack of awareness surrounding the influence of negative lyrics on adolescents' attitudes and behavior is another issue to be addressed in therapy.

Resistance from the community

Many respondents addressed concerns pertaining to obstacles they encounter from administrators, staff, and family members when using popular music in the therapeutic setting. One music therapist stated that sometimes the lyrics of the songs adolescents'
listen to are not considered "appropriate" at the facility in which the session takes place and therefore cannot be used in music listening and/or discussion. Language in song lyrics is a main concern, because parents and administrators might be opposed and so one must be sure to thoroughly investigate the artist, lyrics, style and be sure the content of the lyrics are in line with the mission statement of one's facility and/or practice. The use of popular music in the school setting was also mentioned a few times with an emphasis on the precautions that need to be taken. It becomes necessary to screen client-preferred music for language, profanity and content while at the same time acknowledging the iso-principle (validating what the client gives you and allowing their mode of expression). Some music therapists have created limits pertaining to the issue, such as using no music with parental advisory labels. In the end, the task becomes one of conforming to the work facility's codes while at the same time, learning to balance one's own personal views about popular music with the preferences of adolescents.

The Beneficial Aspects of using Popular Music in Therapy

Music therapists were asked to give their thoughts regarding popular music's potential to aid in providing a positive therapeutic experience. The question was, "In what ways, if any, have you found the use of popular music to be most beneficial to adolescent clients?" There was a lot of similarity in the way respondents answered the question and music therapists' opinions were consistent with the literature's findings. Categories were, again, developed in order to create some clarity as to how the respondents were answering the question. The six categories were as follows; (1) facilitation of group cohesion and discussion, (2) validation of feelings, (3) rapport
builder that provides an opening to the therapeutic relationship, (4) facilitation of self-reflection and self-expression, (5) relaxation, and coping mechanism, and (6) lyric analysis. The information listed below is again, taken directly from the respondents' answers in order to maintain the integrity of those music therapists' statements.

Facilitation of group cohesion and discussion

Music therapists saw popular music as a provider of an interpersonal experience where peer interactions are fostered leading to group discussions and finally, group cohesion. One respondent mentioned that one of music's most beneficial aspects is its ability to unify group members and promote open modes of communication. Popular music is something adolescents can really relate to and therefore bring a group together, facilitate dialogue and access feelings through a medium that is meaningful to them. It was also stated that being able to participate in a group with a positive, esteem-building product could help divert energy that might be spent in self-destructive or asocial behaviors (e.g. drug use, gang violence). Popular music provides the opportunity to discuss such topics as family relationships, confidence, self-esteem, tolerance, inappropriate language, and limit setting. It is a chance for adolescents to compare and contrast lifestyles, and establish common ground among peers concerning issues, challenge cognitive distortions, and discuss cross-cultural issues. Lastly, one music therapist drew attention to the benefits of using popular music with hospitalized adolescents. Hospitalized adolescents seem to discuss their problems with the therapist and peers more when they are provided with a preferred music stimulus. They also tend
to resist becoming "institutionalized" when given opportunities to listen and perform music that reminds them of home.

**Validation of feelings**

Adolescents are thought to listen to that music which reflects their life and validates their feelings. It is used as a form of non-verbal communication that objectifies their thoughts. Popular music seems to help them identify their own feelings of loss, as well as suicide and anger issues, when they hear these themes in the music. Music can be seen as a self-discovery vehicle for certain individuals. When the therapist uses this type of music, they are following the iso-principle, as stated before, in that the client will feel more accepted and validated. Another music therapist noted that in an individual session, listening to the teen’s music, no matter what the style or lyrics, shows that the therapist is willing to accept them. This aids in the building of trust and communication that is pertinent to the success of therapy.

**Rapport builder and mediator of resistance**

Many music therapists saw popular music as being a key that unlocks the adolescents’ psyche. It is a doorway to reach the client and understand their personal goals and needs and provides an opening for a therapeutic relationship. Respondents felt that adolescents are more willing to address their issues if they feel that the therapist speaks their language. Popular music grabs adolescents’ attention and serves as a common ground for music preferences. In other words, adolescents can express their interest or emotions about some form of popular music, which can strengthen the group’s
comfort level and serve as a starting block in therapy. The music helps to establish contact and develop a therapeutic rapport by promoting comfort in an unfamiliar environment. Popular music also serves as an aid to bridging the “generation gap” allowing adolescents to feel more comfortable and more willing to self-disclose and commit to self-exploratory work in therapy. One music therapist felt that popular music is seen as relating to adolescents’ culture and where they are, as opposed to the therapist applying his/her preferences to the client. It is also a good idea to begin working with the familiar and move outward from there, in terms of beginning therapeutic work. Connecting with teens on their level and then moving toward other levels of awareness is imperative when addressing issues of identity, self-esteem and firmly established negative patterns of behavior. Overall, popular music enables the therapist to meet the adolescents on a level they are relating to, build rapport and bypass defenses and issues with authority so that the therapist can more easily gain an understanding of their thoughts, values and feelings.

Facilitator of self-reflection and self-expression

Many responses referred to music’s ability to ignite adolescents’ self-expression through identification with the sound and/or lyrics. Comments alluded to how music provides a forum where adolescents can reflect on and identify personal feelings, confront certain behaviors, and become aware of divergent values. Popular music gives adolescents an opportunity to express who they think they are in a non-threatening way and allows them to project themselves into the music and the roles often described in the lyrics.
Facilitator of relaxation, stress reduction and coping strategies

Respondents referred to music's ability to relax and relieve stress when adolescents needed to do so. Music therapists use popular music to teach adolescent clients how they respond physically and emotionally to music of different types and therefore try to help them see how they can use music to help themselves. It is also helpful that adolescents be aware of their moods and behaviors when listening to music in order to regulate themselves. Therefore, benefits of using popular music include coping mechanisms such as mood enhancing and stabilizing, stress reduction, and self-expression involving communication with peers, and initiation of communication of one's feelings.

Lyric analysis

Discussions about song lyrics are links to creating a cohesive group and igniting self-exploration, expression of feelings, and self-esteem within the group. Lyric analysis is a treatment method used by music therapists in order to elicit the above processes. It can provide the means to discuss one's values, morals, and beliefs while keeping the adolescents "plugged into" the therapy process. Popular music can educate about drugs, relationships, authority and life in general or it can be a reinforcer for group participation. Music therapists wrote about the different ways in which they use lyric discussion groups and how they create different experiences involving song lyrics. One particular technique was taking two songs from the same album and then having the adolescents compare and contrast what they heard, the sounds produced by the performer, any identification to the lyrics and what the proposed messages were of the two songs.
Another music therapist creates a listening experience where the therapist chooses music and then the adolescents rate the pieces, from 1-10, in various ways. Discussions are elicited by rating the song’s imagery, style, lyrics, colors, memories, etc... This provides a framework for clients to express themselves with the emphasis on “no wrong answers.” Another music therapist uses popular music to structure song writing experiences where the adolescents write their own lyrics to popular tunes. This fosters self-expression in the musical and verbal sense where adolescents are encouraged to be creative and discuss among their peer what their personal thoughts are in relation to the music.

In summary, this research elicited a great deal of information in regards to music therapists’ perceived attitudes towards adolescent development and its relationship to popular music. The most significant findings are as follows: music therapists believe that the gender of the listener, as well as the singer, influence adolescents’ listening experience to some degree. However, stereotyped attitudes held by previous findings related to gender-specific uses of music are not widely accepted in most areas. Areas where there is some ambiguity lie in the realm of music’s influence on behavior, specifically related to gender. Music therapists, on the whole, seem to be unsure about the implications of listening to popular music on adolescents’ socialization processes. There is uncertainty as to whether popular music shapes or reflects adolescents’ morals, beliefs, attitudes and values. This uncertainty is also seen in regards to music’s influence on adolescents’ academic performance. Roughly 50% of the music therapists also seem to believe that adolescents are attracted to music that expresses defiance of established social conventions, which alludes to the fact that these subjects may have been rating the statement with those adolescents who are seen in treatment in mind, as opposed to
adolescents who maintain healthy developmental processes. Unfortunately, it seems that
the research did not clarify adequately that the survey statements were to be answered
according to beliefs held about normal, healthy adolescents, and not clinically treated
adolescents. There did seem to be a stronger consensus as to popular music's influence
on adolescents' developmental processes. Music therapists seem to agree that music
listening provides an outlet for adolescents to employ various coping mechanisms,
identity work, socialization with peers, self-exploration, and self-awareness. Another
area where music therapists disagreed in their responses was the influence of song lyrics
and the relevance of lyrics versus the beat in terms of one's preference for a piece of
music. In terms of the qualitative outlook on music therapists' utilization of popular
music with adolescents, there appeared to be a great deal of consensus as to the concerns
associated with its use as well as the benefits derived from its use. Overall, music
therapists appear to be aware of and open to the implications of using popular music with
adolescents. This analysis demonstrates the importance of continuing education for
music therapists, especially in the realm of adolescence, because there is still information
to be learned and understood to a greater degree.
AN INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

In the first category dealing with the influence of gender on both singer and
listener, certain responses were in contradiction to the literature findings. The majority of
respondents felt that the gender of the performer influences one’s listening experience,
whereas in a study conducted by Iverson, et al., this was not the case. However, the
literature in regards to this topic appears to be somewhat sparse and therefore,
conclusions can not be made as to what holds more validity. This area of interest does
seem to warrant further research, both quantitative and qualitative, in order to understand
this phenomenon more fully. The survey responses were less definitive when the
question arose as to how influential the performer’s gender was to males versus females.
More respondents disagreed with this statement in both cases, but there still was an ample
amount of respondents who agreed with the statements.

The majority of music therapists (60.0%) disagreed with the idea that males listen
primarily to the musical qualities in a song, as opposed to the content of the lyrics and
59.7% also felt that males do exhibit strong emotional uses of music. It was interesting to
this researcher to note that 74.2% of the respondents felt that females do not listen to
music more frequently than males and 38.1% of the respondents disagreed that females
report more positive attitudes toward music than males at all ages. Although the
literature states that music listening increases for males and females during the adolescent

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years, as do positive attitudes toward music, many studies have found that females tend to listen to music more often as well as report more positive attitudes toward music.

Another area to examine further is society's views pertaining to music's influence on behavior. This study did not focus on this topic, but its importance was not overlooked. Item 21 stated that the gender of the listener is an important factor in regards to music's influence on behavior. The responses varied and although 39.7% disagreed with the statement, 19.0% agreed, which creates the impression that this matter is still not understood. A more important question to ask would have been, does listening to popular music influence one's behavior? There is no concrete evidence that this is the case, but as the literature stated, this has been a concern dating back to the 1950's. Iverson et al.'s conclusions as to the relevance of song lyrics for females versus males were a piece of the evidence that lyrics serve different purposes for males than females. In their study, males rated the messages of songs more positively when they read the words as opposed to hearing the words sung. Females, however, related more to the song lyrics and felt that the words were more meaningful. The majority of respondents (43.3%) likewise supported this conclusion, but 31.7% had no opinion and probably could be swayed if there was more research conducted. On the whole, it seems that music therapists are open-minded and less biased in terms of gender issues. They are less likely to have a strong preference, and less likely to stereotype females' and males' music listening experiences. The area of concern, however, still remains as to the impact of music on adolescent behavior and the relevance of gender in relation to this area of interest.

The next category was popular music's influence on the socialization of adolescents into adult culture. This category contained some questionable results, which
could serve as a red flag for future research. The literature outlined two different ways in which society looks at the role of popular music. One way is to see popular music as a reflection of society's values, beliefs and current culture, and the other way is to see popular music being more of an active force that shapes and influences listeners leading them to question established behavior patterns, values and ideals. The latter, being the more negative view one could take, was supported by 54.0% of the responses with only 19.0% in disagreement. However, 62.9% of the respondents agreed, and 19.4% strongly agreed with the first statement that music is more of a reflection of society's values and not the influential force. It seems that between the two opinions, the majority agree with the more passive role that music plays in society, but those same people also believe that music has the ability to influence adolescents in a counter-productive manner. Epstein et al. (1990) made the argument that if popular music attempted to change attitudes and values and not reinforce what already existed; it would not be commercially successful.

Another area of concern is the question as to whether lyrics are powerful agents of communication and therefore, negative messages in the music could pose a threat to society. According to Thompson (1993), the majority of adolescents do not interpret "messages" in the same way as adults, and their meanings derived from the music are not as deviant as those of adults. However, a sufficient amount of respondents (47.6%) felt that song lyrics could pose a threat to society, whereas 28.6% disagreed. There seems to be an underlying fear that music possesses a great deal of influence for adolescents, which doesn't always constitute positive consequences. Music therapists also seemed to support the notion that prolonged exposure to the lyrical content of music has some negative reinforcing consequences. Out of the 63 respondents, 52.4% agreed with the
statement, 25.4% had no opinion and only 15.9% disagreed. Research by Mashkin and Volgy (1975) (as cited by Blackburn, 1983) has shown that prolonged exposure to the lyrical content of music has some definite reinforcing consequences from which they argued that even the reinforcing function of music should be highly salient for students’ growth and development. Over half of the music therapists in the study thought otherwise or else stated no opinion.

The survey also expressed the controversial idea that adolescents are attracted to music that expresses defiance of the established social conventions, which was supported by 51.6%. Although the expression of defiance of authority is the most obtrusive feature of some forms of adolescent music, research has shown that only adolescents who had difficulties with their parents, in school, or with societal institutions in general, would be attracted to the exhibition of defiance in rock and rap (Zillman and Gan, 1997). This topic should be explored in greater detail since the majority of music therapists feel that adolescents are attracted to defiant musical expression.

Lastly, the majority of respondents (62.9%) felt that music is a vehicle for teaching adolescents about the norms and rules of society. This idea is also held by Freed (1990), and presents a more positive view of popular music’s influence on adolescents. There seems to be some confusion as to popular music’s main effect on adolescents when it comes to socialization into adult culture. There was an ample amount of support for music’s ability to lead adolescents in questioning society’s values, but there was also the majority rule concerning music’s ability to teach adolescents about the norms and rules of society. This research was exploratory and therefore can only make generalizations and suggest areas of concern/interest.
In regards to the section on popular music's influence on adolescent's developmental processes, there seemed to be little disagreement that music aids teenagers in the search for identity by allowing one to assume various identities and feel a range of internal states through music. Respondents not only agreed (61.9%) that music serves as a "badge" of distinction and identity, but a good number (18.0%) strongly agreed as well. This was true for music therapists' opinions concerning music's ability to function as a socialization agent, allowing one to improve peer relations and gain a better understanding of one's identity. The numbers were high for music's ability to provide a context for self-exploration in the adolescent's life and provide a positive feeling about group membership. Music's ability to aid as a coping strategy for dealing with stress was supported by the majority with only 9.5% in disagreement. Respondents also agreed (62.9%, 16.1% strongly agreed) to music's ability to induce referential meanings, referring to the process of music pointing to something other than itself. This idea is in regards to item 27, which stated that adolescents commonly associate songs with current or past girlfriends/boyfriends. In regards to music's influence on identity work and socialization with peers, it seems that music therapists' views are consistent with the literature. As for music's influence on personality development, the majority of respondents (62.3% in agreement, 13.1% in strong agreement) felt that one's identification with lyrics could influence one's personality development. This feeling was supported in the literature by Toohey's (as cited by Blackburn, 1983) study where attention was given to the social conditioning via mass media. Through his studies, he asserted that lyrics in pop music could contribute to personality development by having a significant influence on the shaping of values. Another statement that did not elicit a
general consensus was whether or not adolescents' sense of self is shaped by their encounters with music. Similar to the previous statement having to do with personality development, responses varied, although the majority was in agreement. It seems that music therapists are likely to give the benefit of the doubt to the argument in favor of using music, but the questioning still remains as to what the reality is. The literature suggests that in Western culture, scholars associate the onset of adolescence with a questioning, "softening" or fragmentation of the childhood self and therefore the adolescents' sense of stability waivers. Teenagers then turn to music listening in order to help them create a separate experiential space at home. During a time with so much vulnerability, it is likely that music could influence one's sense self, both in the social realm and the private realm. As Larson (1995) states though, the media's influence on adolescents' sense of themselves is complex and realized through everyday activities and routines, making effects extremely difficult to measure. This is not because the media are weak and the audience strong, but rather because they are intricately woven into the fabric of daily life (Steele & Brown, 1995). One can also look at this issue as being a process where a teen's sense of who they are shapes their encounters with the media, and those encounters in turn, shape their sense of themselves in the ongoing process of cultural production and reproduction (Steele & Brown, 1995).

The next category examined music therapists' beliefs about the meaning of lyrics and their influence on adolescents. This category contained three statements that elicited varied responses and no consensus. This did not surprise the researcher due to the controversial past with the Parents' Music Resource Center, and society in general. Literature findings state that adolescents do not comprehend the meaning of most songs
and that they interpret song lyrics quite differently from adults, as well as each other. Willis and colleagues (1990) (as cited by Larson, 1995) suggest, however, that

"you can read yourself into a song and temporarily inhabit its identities...the sophisticated sound reproduction of the recorded voice and conversational qualities of many popular music lyrics are linguistic codes that can be inhabited by and so made highly personal to the listener."

The latter statement refers to the personal relevance or meaning that people attach to certain music without concentrating on the lyrics. The question is then proposed how much relevance do lyrics have for music listeners? According to the survey, 49.2% of the respondents felt that adolescents can comprehend the meaning in the majority of song lyrics, whereas only 20.6% disagreed with that statement.

In addition to the categorized survey statements, music therapists were also asked to explain what their concerns were when using popular music in the therapeutic atmosphere. This information was quite helpful, because the literature review focused on the various research studies about adolescent development and popular music, but the therapy session was not brought into view. It was thought that first-hand experience and opinions would be beneficial to the research in order to increase other's awareness as to the possible outcomes and issues of using popular music in the music therapy session.

Many music therapists had concerns about the use of profanity, violence and sexual content in much of the popular music. This is a legitimate concern, especially when parents are involved and questions arise as to the validity and benefit of allowing their children to listen to explicit lyrics. As a practicing music therapist, I personally feel that adolescents should be able to bring in any music to their individual sessions, because
one's preference in music says a lot about the individual's present state in terms of emotion, self-esteem, identity, and sense of self. The job of the therapist is to work through conflicts and feelings with the client and if the music containing profanity and explicit content assists the therapeutic process, the end appears to justify the means. As Lull states in his essay on communicative power of music (1985), "rock music, with its heavy beat, sometimes sexual lyrics and general tone of rebelliousness, is an extension of the emotional state of many adolescents and an effective agent of resistance" (Freed, 1990). The group session is another issue, because the facility in which you work creates the standards and rules and more importantly, the group as a whole needs to be taken into consideration. One must consider the ramifications of using certain music and always consider how to best serve the group. The decision to use popular music with explicit lyrics is important, but one must remember that adolescents use music listening to directly engage with issues of identity, and it is in the music listening that we see the clearest manifestation of the private self (Larson, 1995). It is also in the group member's choice of songs that the therapist is provided with clues about the client's dynamics and transference (Franoes, 1976). One music therapist stated that the use of inappropriate language limits the choices of available music, but this seems hardly the case. Today's popular music is produced by and for young people, thus reflecting adolescent concerns with autonomy, identity, love, and sexuality (Larson, 1995). It seems that there are alternatives to using songs with explicit lyrics, and that the same therapeutic effects can occur.

Another general concern of the respondents was re-creating popular music in the therapy session. Many music therapists understand that popular music grabs the
adolescent's attention and that it serves as a common ground of interest. The concern develops, because in order to create a growth-producing experience, adolescents need to feel acceptance from the therapist and peers. This can cause a problem, because although music can provide security in identifying with other like-minded peers, it can also serve as a vehicle through which adolescents classify each other. Music can serve as the defining, central condition in the formation of interactive groups, leading to competition in taste cultures and music cliques. Frith (1981) (as cited by Zillman & Gan, 1997) researched this idea and stated that "all adolescents use music as a badge of distinction."

Music therapists seem to be aware of this trend as well, but the search continues in order to find therapeutic ways in which to foster communication and break down the barriers. One area that was mentioned briefly in the respondents' comments was the concept of providing a music-making experience that is in step with the clients' musical tastes. It is important to realize the difference between creating a musical experience that provides the musical qualities inherent in popular music as opposed to attempting to re-create popular music with the intention that the music will sound like the original artist's work. Adolescents are going through a period in their life where their sense of self and sense of belonging is unstable. Therefore, the therapist needs to concentrate on giving the group members a sense of mastery and identification with the group.

Many music therapists voiced concerns in regards to the resistance that they encounter from the adolescents in regards to music preference. This is a valid concern mainly because adolescents listen to music that strikes a chord within them. The music can become highly personalized and act as an external foundation of one's identity. Adolescents can therefore become very resistant to change, because it is seen as a
disruption to the balance that they have achieved during a period filled with turmoil and
transition. In addition to the personal meaning music may have for the individual, music
therapists also noticed that this resistance to change could be seen in the group as a
whole. It can be difficult to introduce a new style of music to an adolescent group,
because when that group has focused on a particular musical genre, its members assign
benefits to this clique. They have defined themselves as members of a cultural elite (in
their own perception) and have attained the emotional gratification of belonging. They
also have defined themselves as distinct and different from other peer groups and have
attained gratification of being somehow superior (in their own perception) (Zillman &
Gan, 1997). This indicated need to express oneself by close adherence to specific music
styles is thought to typify adolescence and so it is not surprising that practicing music
therapists have noticed this rigidity and resistance to change.

The open-ended question pertaining to one’s concerns also yielded responses
pertaining to circumstances where the adolescent clients seem to become over-stimulated
with little awareness as to the negativity behind it. Some music therapists noticed that
music can lead to an increase in anger and violence and that adolescents seem to choose
songs with messages of self-destruction. As stated in the literature, musical expression of
defiance of established social conventions and its enforcers does not hold uniform appeal
to all adolescents, but that the enjoyment of such expression presupposes defiant
dispositions (Zillman & Gan, 1997). Zillman & Gan state that only those adolescents
who have difficulties with parents, school, and other institutions that they have developed
resentment against would be attracted to the defiance, but in actuality, it sounds like this
includes almost all adolescents. I expect music therapists, or any therapist for that matter
who works with adolescents, would notice more identification with defiance and violence indicating their need for therapy. These adolescents may have faulty defenses, meaning they may not have appropriate expression of their emotions and are unable to use a healthy amount of repression or sublimation. According to Kohlberg & Gilligan (1971), (as cited by Freed, 1990) adolescence involves a general heightened emotionality. They feel that the difference between this stage with that of earlier stages of development is in fact that, to the adolescent, emotion is now being experienced as part of oneself, instead of something in relation to objective events taking place outside of one’s own body. In addition, many studies on self-esteem show a decline in the worth attributed to the self around this age period, suggesting that this emotional separation from the parents is associated with weakened self-confidence (Larson, 1995). Therapy creates a forum where adolescents are able to slowly acknowledge their feelings, and thoughts in relation to issues surrounding adolescence and puberty. As stated earlier, over-stimulation and lack of awareness concerning themes of negativity may be concerns of music therapists, but this consciousness is what leads the therapy process and allows for change to occur.

Lastly, music therapists voiced concerns about knowing one’s limits with administrators, staff and family members concerning “appropriate” music choices. Song lyrics and the general language of selected music can become a bigger issue. In order to avoid conflicts, music therapists may want to first find out where the facility stands on the issue and then realize where one’s personal issues come into play. This is very important, because as a therapist, one must be fully present without any reservation as to the techniques, and/or interventions one is using. Even if the facility is lenient when it comes to allowing explicit lyrics, the therapist needs to feel just as comfortable in its use
so that one is not guided by hostility or any sort of negativity. However, negativity will usually occur at times and the therapist needs to acknowledge when this happens. In order for good therapy to occur, it is the researcher’s belief that the therapist not remain a blank slate with no expression of affect or opinion. It is thought that a lot of therapeutic work can occur when the client realizes that the therapist is human as well with emotions and opinions, and that these opinions may be beneficial to the client. In summary, adolescents can benefit from an authentic encounter with the therapist and as long as the facility provides leniency as far as client-chosen songs, the therapist may work with the material presented and shape it with the client.

Finally, this research highlighted the implications of the respondents’ beliefs concerning popular music’s therapeutic benefits. Overall, music therapists felt that popular music is a beneficial tool with the adolescent population. Similar to the previous question, responses were duplicated by many of the respondents and therefore categorized in order to structure the discussion. According to Blackburn (1983), eight major categories were developed in response to a questioning of popular music’s affect. These categories included; relaxation, mood enhancement, change of present state, stimulation, emotional and affective responses, self-understanding, socialization and background music to activities, such as homework. Respondents from this survey touched on most of these categories along with the inclusion of facilitating group cohesion and discussion, validation of feelings, rapport builder and lyric analysis. The results section provided a clear view into the therapeutic benefits of using popular music. Every music therapist’s claim pertaining to a potential benefit of the use of popular music with adolescents seemed to be supported by the literature as well. Overall, the use of
popular music was viewed as a vehicle through which peer interaction, group discussion, self-awareness, self-expression and relaxation was fostered. The researcher found no areas where the literature disputes the music therapists' findings, at least where popular music's benefits are concerned. Music therapists mainly need to be aware of how to elicit therapeutic responses through popular music while being aware of the music's various implications to adolescents and themselves, mainly in terms of one's own attitudes, beliefs and biases toward the music.
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to survey music therapists in order to gain a better understanding of their attitudes and beliefs toward popular music's relationship to adolescent development. The researcher developed the survey in response to the literature findings concerning adolescents' involvement with popular music with the hope that trends or similarities in music therapists' views would be detected. The purpose for this research stemmed from a personal feeling of not fully understanding the impact that popular music has on adolescents. It then became apparent that the literature consisted of opposing views, along with multiple hypotheses and findings. Another reason for performing this research is that although music therapy courses concentrate on various areas of musicianship, psychology and clinical work, the area of popular music and its effect on the adolescent years seems not to have been fully addressed. Therefore, one's knowledge pertaining to this subject is only enhanced by personal experience and through clinical work with adolescents. It was thought that by surveying music therapists who are currently in the practice and working mainly with adolescents, a picture could be drawn connecting the literature and the present practice of music therapy with adolescents.

According to the results of the survey, the field of music therapy seems to be populated heavily by female therapists in the 31-40 year age range. They are educated in a variety of areas and the majority (79.4%) currently do not have children in the adolescent years. The fact that most of the respondents do not have children of the.
adolescent years could be an influential factor in this research. It would be interesting to know whether or not these respondents have previously experienced the adolescent years with their children. In other words, are music therapists simply basing their knowledge of adolescents on clinical experience or are they forming opinions based on personal experience of one's own adolescence and/or experience with adolescent children.

Another interesting factor from the demographic information is the rejection of rap in all of the respondents' listening preference. The most frequently listened to music style was classical (62.0%), which would be considered uncharacteristic and quite opposite of the music listened to by adolescents. Are music therapists able to distance themselves from their apparent dislike of rap or is it a challenge and therefore impedes the therapeutic process at times? These are matters to consider when looking at the data from the survey, because many factors come into play when answering statements based on one's beliefs and attitudes. The majority of the music therapists agreed that many clinical issues are dealt with in therapy and that the frequency with which they present themselves in therapy was also similar. All of the symptoms and issues were thought to occur during the time of adolescence, but some with more frequency than others. It was surprising; however, to notice that some music therapists believed that depression, suicidal tendencies, fear, mania, and issues of loss and death never occurred with their patients. These very symptoms have been documented as having a strong correlation with the period of adolescence in which physical, mental and emotional changes occur. Theorists regard adolescence as a time where psychotic-like behavior is considered to be normal and therefore, one would expect to encounter such symptoms. The results of the survey
indicated that depression, anxiety, anger, self-esteem, and sense of self seemed to be the most prominent and frequent issues involved in therapy sessions.

According to the results, music therapists seem to be somewhat open-minded in terms of gender differences was supported by the literature and it seemed to convey the sense that music therapists are not taken in by the stereotypical views that label males insensitive and unemotional. However, 23.8% of the respondents indicated that gender of the listener is an important factor in regards to music’s influence on behavior. Although music is likely to affect listeners differently, this statement may want to be studied in greater detail. It seems that a good percentage of people in the music therapy field question the basis for certain behaviors as a result from music listening. Respondents did not support the bias in regards to music being portrayed as a feminine subject, but this could be examined further, because the music therapy profession is mainly female. It would be interesting to survey a random sample of people in other professions, especially those in the health profession, with a high number of male employees, and discover what their attitudes and beliefs are about music’s affect on males versus females? What are their overall impressions about music, especially whether they feel it is a more ‘feminine’ interest? It is important to educate those who work with people on a daily basis in order to minimize the biased beliefs that may stem from one’s own childhood experiences, which in effect, shed a positive or negative light on one’s entire experience of adolescence. One more issue to think about here is the question of gender versus genre of music. It did not occur to the researcher that certain genres are dominated by one gender, such as rap and heavy metal, which are mostly male and pop rock, which is mostly female. One must consider whether the listener is
influenced more by the musical style or the gender of the singer? One's preference for
certain sounds can interplay with the gender of the singer.

Overall, it seems that respondents were uncertain as to the magnitude of popular
music's influence on adolescents and it seems that this is a legitimate concern. There
seemed to be more of a consensus on potential positive benefits from listening to popular
music, but the areas where confusion seemed to arise included music's influence on
adolescent socialization, personality development, and academic performance, and the
influence of song lyrics.

Personally, popular music was extremely important to me in my adolescent years
and its use was quite conscious. There was a lot of exposure to popular music and one's
association with certain types of music was at times typified by one's dress, attitude and
social cliques. Whether the music took an active role in molding one's character or
whether inner psychic processes influenced music listening is difficult to ascertain. This
is where the debate occurs. According to the survey results, music appears to both shape
and reflect the current ideals, values, and beliefs of the adolescent culture. However, the
literature holds the assumption that music takes a more passive role in reflecting the
current state of the society at hand. Although the majority of responses favored each
item, a greater number of respondents believed that music is a reflection of society. It is
uncertain where the overall consensus lies, because the percentages do not differ
dramatically and it was thought that subjects would be more biased in their answers. Bias,
in terms of making a judgment call between the two statements. From a music therapist's
view, it seems that one's inner psychic state is reflected in the music we choose and by
the discussions that occur after the music experiences. Here we see music facilitating the
expression of thoughts, attitudes, and quite possibly, morals and values. In the music therapy session, one may use therapeutic methods to help shape an adolescent client's belief, but to find that this occurs on a regular basis would be important to know.

However, it seems that if one is to see music listening as a shaping force in the adolescents' life, the entity of music is given a rather supernatural quality. Music is looked at as a force that needs to be contained, because of a fear that it "possesses the power" to influence others, mainly adolescents. More research may want to be conducted in this area, which would allow for greater understanding to occur.

One other interesting finding pertained to the number of people (58.7%) who believe that prolonged exposure to lyrics can have some negative reinforcing consequences. This was surprising to the researcher, because music therapy encourages the use of music in all of its forms. However, some respondents did clarify their answers by indicating that it would depend on what the lyrics are saying. Subjects also clarified that the category "sometimes" would fit better for this statement, because prolonged exposure to anything can have negative consequences.

Music therapists seemed to hold similar views to those posed in the literature pertaining to the influence of popular music on developmental tasks. There seemed to be an awareness as to the therapeutic manner in which popular music serves adolescents. There was little disagreement as to the potential value that music listening produces, whether it be for coping with stress, exploring one's identity, socialization with peers, reminiscence of memories or maintaining/changing a mood. In contrast to the previous sections, music therapists seem to understand what the benefits are from listening to popular music. If not from personal experience, clinical training and hands-on
experience with others seems to have provided music therapists with insight as to the many benefits music has to offer another. Another item to note from the results is that more responses were tallied in the strongly agree box than previous categories, which could reflect music therapists’ passion for music.

Another interesting finding was that the majority of music therapists felt that music listening might influence personality development. Future studies may want to focus on how the different aspects of personality development are influenced by the qualities of music, its sound and song lyrics. In order to do this, one would want to look at how the ego, superego and id can be affected by listening to certain messages in song lyrics. How do the musical qualities of a song influence the adolescent and their personality growth? This is an important issue to examine, because it places a great deal of importance on music listening, even the passive role that music takes.

One statement that elicited a varied response pertained to music selection being conscious and being motivated by the need to learn something or maintain a mood. Respondents informed the researcher that this statement referred to three different processes and therefore it was difficult to answer. In light of this information, accurate conclusions are difficult to ascertain. Future research may want to closely examine the focus of each survey question so that statements/questions are clear to the subjects. Conducting a pilot study using a small, random sample may increase one’s chances of collecting more accurate responses by allowing the researcher to correct any misunderstandings pertaining to the overall survey.

Other areas where music therapists seemed to disagree included those statements pertaining to the influence of lyrics. It is the researcher’s feeling that music therapists
might be mistaking the process of lyric analysis, where the therapist employs a treatment method aimed at eliciting group discussions about song lyrics, with adolescents' ability to understand lyrics in their general music listening. However, people seem to remember most of the words to those songs that were popular in their adolescence. According to one respondent, it is thought that late adolescence and early twenty's music preferences often become one's “lifetime” music. They stated that it is the music a person identifies closest with and can recall throughout their lifetime. It seems that this may be true, because during one's adolescence, the self is more emotional and fragmented, and external sources, such as peers, teachers, television and music, become quite significant. Although there are some studies claiming that many adolescents misunderstand song lyrics and their inherent messages, it is questionable as to whether music therapists' views hold stronger validity than the literature. In order to clarify what adolescents' experiences are, one would want to conduct a study with adolescents as the subjects. The research could be quantitative with the subjects answering questions as to the messages heard in various songs. Preferably subjects should encompass a wide range of ethnicity, race, and gender in order to gain a multicultural view. The research could also take a more qualitative approach by conducting interviews with adolescents and questioning them as to the relevance of certain music and what their experience is with music. It is certain that adolescents are able to derive their own conclusions as to the message of certain songs, but as to whether or not universal messages are understood by the majority of listeners seems to warrant more attention.

Another thought to consider is how the messages of love/courtship songs are understood versus the messages of heavy metal, rap and various other forms of popular
music. In the 1950’s, Horton (1957) (as cited by Blackburn, 1983) classified the era according to the relationship of the lyrics to five stages of adolescent love-making and overall felt that the lyrics provided a conventional language for formulating adolescent expectations and self-conceptions. Also, Lull found that by concentrating on the lyrics, the listener might use music in special ways. He noticed that people remember key lyrics, mainly those that have special meaning to the self or to someone else who “shares the code” (Lull, 1987). The concept of gender being a significant variable in lyric interpretation also should be an area of focus, because research has shown females having a greater response to lyrics than males. Therefore, it could be of interest to examine this correlation between lyric interpretation and gender in a study.

Overall, half of the subjects agreed that the sound or beat of music is more important in determining preference for a particular piece of music than are lyrics, but there were many other variables to consider in terms of the respondents and their adolescent clients. This research studied music therapists’ attitudes and beliefs, but there was no way of telling what the dominant ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status and overall culture was of the subjects as well as their adolescent clients. What are the variables, and factors that influenced their responses? The literature speaks about the influence of taste cultures. According to Gans, (1966) (as cited by Zillman & Gan) taste cultures represent people who are similarly predisposed to consume items of similar content. In relation to adolescents and popular music, one may see much variance in the classification of music consumed by adolescents; i.e. rankings of classifications of popular music differ for Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Whites as well as for males and females. According to Thompson (1993) research has shown that rock’s meaning as a
mass medium is not dependent on its lyrical content, the beat, or the overall sound, but
instead, from its relationship to specific segments within youth culture. Therefore, it
would be helpful for future studies if the researcher was aware of the respondents’
environment so that there is a greater understanding as to the influences guiding the
responses.

Another area where there seemed to be discrepancies in answers was the question
as to whether one’s engagement with popular music influenced one’s academic
performance or whether one’s performance in school affected musical taste. The
researcher was interested as to whether or not the respondents saw popular music as an
active and influential force in the adolescent’s school life, or if musical taste is a reaction
to one’s lifestyle, school life in particular. It was interesting to see that the majority of
respondents disagreed with both scenarios, indicating the discrepancy. Did the subjects
sense that this was a generalized statement and therefore had difficulty in forming an
opinion? It may be that music therapists are involved very little with academics and/or
see no correlation between one’s performance in school with musical taste and therefore
disagreed. Lastly, it seems that the researcher could have clarified the statements by
developing a positive or negative connotation associated with the statements. According
to the literature though, research by Roe (1983, 1987) (as cited by Zillman & Gan, 1997)
generated considerable support for the proposal that pupils’ academic success or failure
shapes their musical taste, and that this shaping is independent of social-class standing.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research
A limitation that the researcher mentioned earlier is the lack of knowledge pertaining to the heterogeneous quality of subjects. This also relates to the adolescents that the subjects based their opinions on. The researcher was not aware as to the gender, race, ethnicity, religion and/or socioeconomic status of the respondents or adolescents in their practice. One of the respondents commented on how certain genres of music are dominated by one gender and/or race, i.e. African-American males dominate rap. The literature has touched on some of these variables in terms of their influential character so it seems that future research would benefit from including these items in the demographic information of the respondent with a section added indicating the dominant traits of the clinical population in which he/she works.

The discussion highlighted some of the foreseeable limitations and suggestions for future research. Another area for improvement was the survey questions. Although the survey’s main purpose was to detect trends in music therapists’ beliefs pertaining to popular music and its relation to adolescent development, many of the statements seemed to be too generalized. Respondents commented on the fact that many of the statements included two or three different concepts and therefore led the respondent to either answer “No Opinion,” leave the response blank or else answer according to part of the statement. Included in this topic is the generalization associated with the term “popular music.” This term was not clearly understood by all since popular music could refer to something different for each individual. Even though not many of the respondents commented on this, the researcher is unaware as to how each subject understood the term. Overall, the assumptions that a person had to make in response to certain survey items may have skewed the results.
One respondent made the suggestion that it would be valuable to survey adolescents, because each answer could change depending on which adolescent they were thinking about. This is definitely something to think about in terms of future research. It would generate a different picture, perhaps in contradiction to music therapists' views.

Another area of focus for future research would be the role of the unconscious in connection with music listening. Throughout the study, the researcher questioned how much of the music therapists' own experience of their adolescence affected their responses and whether they were aware of any strong feelings toward this subject. It seems that this developmental stage of human development is full of conflicted feelings and therefore, very vivid in people's lives. This sort of research could be very interesting, but taxing as well in that the unconscious is broad and somewhat mysterious. It would be of benefit for this research to be conducted by one who is well versed in this area.

One last suggestion for future research would be to correlate the demographic information with the responses in order to detect any trends. Questions arose for the researcher as to whether age, music preference, education, or length of time in the field had any effect on the manner in which the responses were given. The researcher also wondered whether having adolescent children of your own influenced one's responses? Overall, it seems that more research should be done in this field so that a better understanding the relevance of popular music in the adolescent's life.
SUMMARY

The objective of this study was to survey music therapists in order to find out what their current beliefs and attitudes are in terms of popular music and its relation to adolescent development. The literature seemed to contain a lot of information pertaining to this subject, but there were clear signs, indicated by subjects’ responses, that a lot of uncertainty still remains among clinicians. These areas included popular music’s influence in regards to one’s gender, either listener or singer, its influence on socialization processes into adult culture, personality development, and behavior, as well as the influence of song lyrics. Popular music appears to provide a therapeutic atmosphere for adolescents, but the question of “why” is still unclear. The literature provided the researcher with many avenues to explore in terms of popular music’s influence on the adolescent population. This study was intended to explore music therapists’ present knowledge of this subject in terms of attitudes, opinions and personal beliefs. It was the hope of the researcher that information gained from the survey would add to the body of knowledge in related areas, and provide suggestions for future research.

The main instrument used for data collection was a survey, created by the researcher. It was sent to 132 music therapists whose names appeared in the AMTA (American Music Therapy Association) 1999 member source book as clinicians working in child/adolescent treatment centers. The researcher received 70 responses (52.6%
return rate), but only 63 surveys could be analyzed due to the fact that the remaining 7 respondents worked with children only. Therefore, the results of this study were based on those subjects' responses.

There were many findings in this study that supported and at times, refuted the literature. Unfortunately, there were no definitive answers to be gained from this research, but there was a gathering of valuable information that aided in creating a better understanding of the proposed relationship as well as a knowledge base from which future studies can refer to. This research produced a current vision as to how practicing music therapists see the influence of popular music on adolescents and what they see are the benefits and concerns associated to using popular music in their practice. The researcher provided some alternate avenues to direct future research ventures with hopes that in time, the effects of listening to popular music will be better understood and valued as a key component in the adolescent's life.
Dear Colleague,

I am conducting research in order to learn more about music therapists’ beliefs and attitudes about the relationship between adolescent development and the role of popular music.

It has been documented that music listening increases dramatically in the adolescent years and because of this, music therapists frequently use popular music to aid in their therapeutic aims. Research claims that adolescents use music to directly engage with issues of identity, but to this date, further evidence seems to be warranted. Music therapists’ education is based in music, and clinical foundations, but the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) contains no knowledge-based area related to adolescents’ involvement with music. It would be helpful, therefore, to understand how others perceive the relationship between music and adolescent development.

I am interested in surveying music therapists in order to create a clearer understanding of the beliefs and knowledge practicing music therapists have concerning adolescents’ identification process with popular music.

I have enclosed a copy of the survey to be completed, along with a self-addressed envelope. It would be greatly appreciated if you complete the survey prior to February 21, 2000. Participants of this survey must not disclose any identifiable or personal information not pertaining to the survey. Your responses, therefore, will remain anonymous. I would welcome any comments you have concerning the survey in the section “Additional Comments.” If you would like a copy of the abstract, please feel free to call the number listed above and leave a message with the director of the music therapy program, Paul Nolan. I hope that you will take the time to fill it out. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jessica Walters
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please indicate all of the following that apply to you:

1. Educational Status: (fill in all degree names and/or Institute Certifications)
   - ___ Bachelor's degree in __________________
   - ___ Master's degree in __________________
   - ___ Advanced graduate degree in __________________
   - ___ Other: (specify) __________________

2. Gender
   - 1. ___ Male
   - 2. ___ Female

3. Age:
   - 1. ___ 25 or under
   - 2. ___ 26-30
   - 3. ___ 31-40
   - 4. ___ 41-50
   - 5. ___ 51 or over

4. Music Preference:
   - 1. ___ pop rock
   - 2. ___ heavy metal
   - 3. ___ classic rock
   - 4. ___ rap
   - 5. ___ blues
   - 6. ___ alternative
   - 7. ___ R&B
   - 8. ___ classical
   - 9. ___ jazz
   - 10. ___ country
   - 11. ___ other
   - 12. ___ classical

5. Do you have any children between the ages of 12 and 18?  
   - 1. ___ yes
   - 2. ___ no

6. Current Job Title __________________

7. Years employed as a music therapist
   - 1. ___ 0-5 yrs.
   - 2. ___ 6-10 yrs.
   - 3. ___ 11-20 yrs.
   - 4. ___ 21+ yrs.

8. Years employed with adolescents in music therapy
   - 1. ___ 0-5 yrs.
   - 2. ___ 6-10 yrs.
   - 3. ___ 11-20 yrs.
   - 4. ___ 21+ yrs.

9. What percentage of your work is with adolescents? ________

10. Please indicate the clinical problems with which your patients have presented:
    Choose: 1 for often  2 for sometimes  3 for rarely  4 for never
    - ___ depression
    - ___ anxiety
    - ___ anger
    - ___ fear
    - ___ mania
    - ___ isolation
    - ___ self-esteem
    - ___ suicide
    - ___ issues of loss
    - ___ issues about death
    - ___ sense of self

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USIC THERAPISTS’ VIEWS: MUSIC & ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT
This survey’s purpose is to understand music therapists’ views pertaining to adolescents and their relationship to popular music. For purposes of this questionnaire, adolescents are regarded as 12-18 years of age.

Please check the appropriate column that correlates with your response:

1. The gender of the performer influences one’s listening experience
2. The gender of the performer influences boys’ listening experience more than girls
3. The gender of the performer influences girls’ listening experience more than boys
4. Boys, in contrast to girls, attend primarily to the musical qualities in a song as opposed to the content of the lyrics
5. Girls listen to music more frequently than boys
6. Lyrics serve as powerful agents of communication and therefore its messages can pose a threat to society
7. Adolescents use music listening as their most frequently used coping strategy for dealing with stress
8. Music is a way for adolescents to assume various identities and feel a range of internal states
9. Adolescents can comprehend the meaning in the majority of song lyrics
10. Music provides a positive feeling about group membership
11. One’s identification with lyrics could influence one’s personality development
12. Popular music is a reflection of society’s values, beliefs and current culture
13. Adolescents interpret song lyrics very similarly and therefore can grasp the “messages” that musicians send out
14. Popular music shapes and influences young listeners leading them to question established behavior patterns, values, and ideals
15. Prolonged exposure to the lyrical content of music has some negative reinforcing consequences
16. Music functions as a socialization agent allowing one to improve peer relations and gain better understanding of one’s identity
17. Girls report more positive attitudes toward music than boys at all ages
18. Music is regarded as a “feminine” subject and therefore far more likely to attract, and be valued by, girls than boys
19. Adolescents use music as a symbol- a “badge” of distinction/identity
20. Adolescents are attracted to music that expresses defiance of established social conventions.

21. Gender of the listener is an important factor in regards to music's influence on behavior.

22. Adolescents' academic successes or failures shape their musical taste.

23. Adolescents' musical tastes affect one's performance in school.

24. Adolescents' sense of self is shaped by their encounters with music.

25. Selection of music is conscious and is motivated by the need to learn something or to maintain a mood.


27. Adolescents commonly associate songs with current, or past, girlfriends/boyfriends.

28. Lyrics are more meaningful to girls as opposed to reading the words in the absence of music.

29. Music listening provides a context for self-exploration.

30. Music is a vehicle for teaching teenagers about the norms and rules of society.

31. The sound or beat of music is more important in determining preference for a particular piece of music than are lyrics.

What have you found, as a music therapist, to be the biggest concern in using popular music with adolescent clients?

In what ways, if any, have you found the use of popular music to be most beneficial to adolescent clients?

Additional Comments:

Thank you.

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REFERENCES


