THE SOCIOLOGICAL NORMING OF MEMBERS' CONCEPTS OF "VIOLENT MUSIC"

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Ms. Liz. Thanks for being MY mom and always answering the telephone. I love you mom. I also dedicate my thesis to my papa, James Glowinski. I owe you everything for teaching me the importance of reading because without the reading, this thesis would not exist. I love you pop. I dedicate this thesis to my great-niece Isabella Rose, who always puts a smile on my face. I dedicate my thesis to my committee chair, Dr. Joseph A. Kotarba. Thank you for your wisdom, guidance, time, and patience. The best way I can ever pay you back is by doing the best I can. I owe Debbie Owens, Diana Felix, Maria Noonan, Nadia Dave, and especially Samantha Waggerman thanks for being there from the beginning and teaching me how to be a student. Other important people in my life include Sammy Wammy, Mr. Jose Ruiz, Ms. Mary Grant, Ms. Tina Marsh, and Dr. William Crisp. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my family, friends, and everyone I did not have the space to name. Every zig and every zag of my life was required to bring me to this one moment. It was never about luck, only very hard work. Thank you all for making this thesis possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
AFA	American Family Association
EDM	Electric Dance Music
EEG	Electroencephalogram
fMRI	Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging
HRV	Heart Rate Variability
IRB	Institutional review Board
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
L	Language
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women
NOW	National Organization for Women
NPCBW	National Political Congress of Black Women
NRC	National Rainbow Coalition
PMRC	Parents Music Resource Center
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
VA	Veterans Administration

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to provide a symbolic interactionist context for an interdisciplinary study of cardiovascular psychophysiological responses to violent music. The study involves an interdisciplinary team of psychological, criminal justice, and sociological researchers. The goal of the study was to examine the mediating effects of mindfulness meditation on the cardiovascular psychophysiological effects of violent music. The sociological component of this study was the assembly of an inventory of popular music songs that are perceived and defined by audience members as "violent music." Following the dictates of symbolic interaction, we see songs as social objects and interactionist accomplishments. Using Tia DeNora's conceptual framework, this project will use a contextualist approach to understanding music given that music does not have intrinsic meaning. We seek to discover how audience members define certain songs in particular situations and in the presence of certain others. My analysis was based upon a series of questionnaires administered to university freshmen. These questionnaires included items regarding formal music training, religious affiliation, combat experience, and respondent's opinions of what a violent song is and why they perceive it as such. The popular music genres that emerged from my study as significant include Screamo, Death Metal, Powerviolence, Post Hardcore, and Deathcore. The songs that emerge from this phase of the study will be used to stimulate cardiovascular psychophysiological responses to be measured by means of heart rate variance (HRV) procedures, and mindfulness meditation will be a moderator to the impact of music on heart rate. We are contributing to the scholarly debate over the nature of violent music, moving beyond structuralist definitions of violent music in terms of lyrics, sound, dissonance, and consonance to a more interactionist friendly definition of violent music as situational and meaningful.

1. INTRODUCTION

Music is an all-encompassing experience that is produced and consumed by all individuals and groups in all cultures and societies. The issue to be examined in this thesis project is the concept of *violent music*. How we understand music and the relationship of violent music to behavior varies according to different researchers, writers, and disciplines. For example, scholars have approached the problem of violent music and behavior using different methodologies that have resulted in different meanings of violent music. Some methodologies use lyrics as a means of defining violent song definitions while others focus on the musical sound. A team of scholars from the College of Education, the School of Criminal Justice, and the Departments of Psychology and Sociology formed at Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, to study violent music and how it affected behavior when using mindfulness meditation as an intervening variable. The team analyzed different definitions of violent music in order to arrive at one that fits best with this psychologically centered study.

There is a substantial amount of research by many scholars on violent music and on what constitutes a violent song because it is culture bound. This study aims at unpacking the meanings of the nuances individuals use to interpret what constitutes a violent song. The purpose of my thesis is the norming of what a violent song is by using a sociological perspective of meaning, as opposed to mindfulness. For my study, the definition of the concept *normed* refers to the process through which a pattern of behavior is considered acceptable or proper by a social group (Cicchetti 1994). The premise of my study is that a definition of a violent song is most useful to the larger psychologically centered project when derived from members' understandings of the concept *violent music*. My

sociological research study seeks to discern the differences among the respondents and how violent music fits into the bigger spectrum of the music experience.

The norming of a violent song is required because of the disagreement among the research disciplines of musicology, journalism, religion, psychology, and sociology of what defines a violent song. My study used two surveys and a focus group to collect descriptive data to determine the meanings attached or attributed to the violent song by a select population of Introduction to Sociology (1310) undergraduate students. Once the norming process was completed, five violent songs were chosen according to the respondents' perceptions of a violent song, which was created by unpacking the respondents' responses to what defines the experiences, feelings, and meanings of a violent song. The norming process may inform our understanding of how meaning and preferences toward music shape perceptions about what defines violent music.

When the general meaning and definition of a violent song have been normed, five violent songs will be chosen to be used in a pending pilot heart rate variability (HRV) mindfulness meditative project conducted with other faculty members at Texas State. The mindfulness meditative project will use two groups of respondents. Group one will have been trained for a twenty minute guided mindfulness meditation session while group two will not be trained in mindfulness meditation. Before the test, respondents in group one will be asked to meditate according to their mindfulness meditative training. Group two will be asked to sit and relax. The respondents in both groups will be attached to HRV data collection equipment, and then the respondents will listen to the chosen violent song. Data will be collected using HRV equipment to measure the effect of a violent song on individuals who have mindfulness meditation training and meditate before hearing a

violent song versus those who do not. The second group of respondents will be used as the control group.

This data and analysis will then be used in psychological stimuli and arousal studies to examine the ways mindfulness meditation may mediate the effects of violent music on heart rate variability (HRV), which could then lead to future studies that examine cardiovascular psychophysiological, cognitive, emotional, neural, and physiological changes that occur when listening to violent music. Eventually, research could then be performed to measure how the violent song affects functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of the listener's brain. The research will answer fundamental questions about how meanings and impressions about music are interrelated. It will also allow for a deeper understanding of how we perceive and categorize music. On a broader level, this research represents an important first step in understanding how music affects cognitions, physiological responses, behaviors, and emotions. The present study's results will be used to guide and inform future research that examines these issues in finer detail.

Theoretical Framework for the Project

My thesis study bases its research on the theoretical tradition of symbolic interaction while using the social constructionists' interpretive approach that "all social reality is constructed, or created, by social actors" (Esterberg 2002:15). The focus of this perspective is on the *interaction* because individuals' self-concepts are constructed according to their symbolic interactions with others (Cooley 1902; May 2001; Mead 1934). This paradigm studies how individuals act toward each other, the objects in their world, and how meaning that the individual attaches to people and things in their world can and do change (Esterberg 2002). However, my research study will have a focus on

how the *pragmatic self* (Kotarba 2013) constructs the meaning for violent popular music. The pragmatic truth in popular music is that there is no ideal type of popular music; only what the music does will determine the truth of the music by interpretation of the musical symbols and signs by the listeners (Mead 1934; Kotarba 2013). For the purpose of my study, musical symbols and signs were used to determine violence in popular music, by asking respondents what musical symbols and signs construct meaning for violent popular music. After collecting the descriptive data, the responses were interpreted by the co-researchers (Bernard D. Glowinski and Joseph A. Kotarba) to determine what symbols and signs determine a violent song, but the interpretation was based on how the co-researchers describe the respondents' experiences, feelings, and meanings for violent popular music.

Numerous disciplines have contributed constructively to the scholarly issues raised in this study. The next chapter will review the multi-disciplinary literature on brain activity, meditation, and music.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to address the psychological change that occurs when listening to violent music, I will review the broader scholarly literature to arrive at a general definition of violent music from a sociological perspective. Researchers and scholars from different disciplines study violence and music, but they use different methodologies to measure violent music. The different research disciplines may talk about violent songs, not with a systematic meaning of violent music concepts, but only with the taken-for-granted commonsense understandings of violent music as an element of everyday life (Kotarba, Merrill, Williams, and Vannini 2013). The purpose of this literature review is to describe the different systematic meanings of violent music concepts by exploring literature from the research disciplines of musicology, journalism, religion, psychology, and sociology to explain how this sociological naming exercise differs from other disciplines.

Violence: Three Different Parts

For the purpose of my research study, the concept of *violence* must be defined. According to Merriam-Webster's (2015) dictionary, violence is, "The use of force to harm someone, to damage property: great destructive force of energy." Individuals hold in the forefront of their minds obvious social signals and signs of violence that display themselves to society in the form of acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, and war (Žižek 2008). This type of violence is the most visible concept of the triumvirate of violence and is referred to as *subjective* violence (Žižek 2008). The other two types of violence in the triumvirate are categorized as *objective* types of violence (Žižek 2008). The first objective type of violence is *symbolic*, and it is embodied in language and takes the form of discrimination, hate-speech, and racism (Žižek 2008). Symbolic violence and

domination can be reproduced in habitual forms of speech, and the language usage pertains to certain universal meaning (Žižek 2008). The other type of objective violence is *systemic* and takes the form of the consequences of what is referred to as the smooth functioning of the economic and political systems that lead to devastating violent acts against society (Žižek 2008).

Subjective and objective violence should not be perceived from the same point of view because subjective violence can only be perceived against a background of an absolutely non-violent society that violates the *normal* non-violent state of society (Žižek 2008). Objective violence is the precise violence that is inherited in the normal state of society, is invisible, and sustains the zero-level non-violent society where something is perceived as "subjective violence" (Žižek 2008:2). Accordingly, symbolic violence uses music when words fail; this literature review will focus on symbolic violence to help define the meaning of a violent song.

Musicology: A System of Semiotic Character and Signs

Homo sapiens have been pounding on rocks with different size rocks to produce a sound well before they were walking up right because sound has evolved from the "reptilian," or the oldest part, of the brain (Armstrong 2013; Zunshine 2012). Sound was needed for survival when *Homo sapiens* were a hunted species, and hearing is considered an evolutionary process (Armstrong 2013; Levitin 2006; Sacks 2008; and Zunshine 2012). Reading has only been taking place for an estimated six thousand years and is an adaptation of the human brain, not an evolutionary mutation (Armstrong 2013; Levitin 2006; Sacks 2008; and Zunshine 2012). When trying to determine the meaning of violent music, the literature is divided. Some researchers theorize that sound matters more while

other researchers theorize that lyrics matter more when discerning violent music (Ruwet 1967).

Musicology and linguistics can be viewed from a similar perspective when studying words because of their semiotic character (Ruwet 1967). Chomsky and Miller (1963) theorized that music and language could be treated as "systems of signs," or as a language with the capital "L" (Ruwet 1967). Any language (L) is constructed by a set of finite or infinite sentences, and each finite length sentence is constructed by a series of interconnected events or things (Chomsky and Miller 1963; Ruwet 1967). A sentence concatenation is constructed by using a finite set of elements that also applies to music (Chomsky and Miller 1963; Ruwet 1967). First, it must be accepted that a piece in music is the equivalent of a sentence (Chomsky and Miller 1963; Ruwet 1967). Like a sentence, the concept of *concatenation* in a musical piece includes the elements of simultaneous relations, or harmony, and oblique relations, or a countermeasure (Chomsky and Miller 1963; Ruwet 1967).

List (1963) theorized that musicology and linguistic study are, for the most part, the same concepts because they both include metrics, intonation, and the "tone" language. Aestheticians of music have often referenced language by comparing pure speaking to pure singing, but they study aesthetics instead of semiotics; therefore, their research may miss how modern linguistics contributes to musicology (Langer 1942; Schloezer 1947). Speech and music are considered higher-level thinking skills produced by human beings (Besson, Faïta, Peretz, Bonnel, and Requin 1998). The combination of speech and music produces the concept of intimate vocal music, which some believe to be the oldest and most popular among the different forms of music (Besson et al. 1998).

Musicologists research the musical design of a song to determine if the listener perceives the musical components separately from the lyrics or if the listener integrates the two musical elements into a single perception (Besson et al. 1998). However, Saarikallio and Erkkilä (2007) theorize that harmonic music is the most important aspect of music, not the semantic language of a song (Besson et al. 1998; Zwag, Westerink, and Broek 2011).

More recent years of musicology. Musicologists study the history of music because the historical context of music may lead to behavior in the individual or society (Feld and Fox 1994). Research in ethnomusicology has taken on the rhetoric of an anthropological perspective that evolved from the anthropology of music (Merriam 1964) to musical anthropology (Feld and Fox 1994; Seeger 1987). Music was researched using the premise of "music *and* or *in* culture, society, and history to the study of music *as* culture, society, and history (Blacking 1973; Blum 1975; Blum, Bohlman, and Neuman 1991; Coplan 1988; Feld 1984; Feld and Fox 1994; Grenier and Guibault1990; Herndon and McLeod 1979; Merriam 1979; Netti and Bohlman 1991; Qureshi 1987; Rice 1987; Seeger 1992; Turino 1989; Turino 1990). According to Feld and Fox (1994), ethnomusicological methodology has taken on the perspective of music performances and styles that are social, which connects the structure and practice of music to local and translocal music scenes and places, creating social imagination, activity, and experience. Linguistic anthropology, like musicology, emphasizes how the social, pragmatic, and emotional linguistic structure of music has created discourse, performance, textuality, and poetics in the language of a song.

When trying to determine the meaning of a violent song, musicologists analyze if violence is something that is added to music or if music is something added to violence

(Chen, Miller, Grube, and Waiters 2006). Musical linguistic perspectives of society and culture can describe musical behavior in the society or culture because listening to music is one of the most common leisure-time activities for most people regardless of generation (Chen et al. 2006; Feld and Fox 1994). Classical music has a long history as violent music because of the consonance and dissonance of the sound (Anonymous 1997), but in contemporary society, the *voice* is an important concept when describing its relationship to music and language (Feld and Fox 1994). Analogies of linguistic structures are used to produce musical structures that create the language of music, which includes its own "language of music, musical syntax, the grammar of a particular musical style, or the identification of deep and surface structures in a particular music genre" (Feld and Fox 1994:26). The voice can be used to embody spoken and sung performance but can also be used to create a sense of voice that represents social position and power by using sound communication (Barthes1977).

Music as language. The interdisciplinary literature on music and language in acoustics, anthropology, linguistics, literary studies, musicology, philosophy, and psychology connect music and language by using four major predications: music as language, language in music, music in language, and language about music (Feld and Fox 1994). Musical structure creates grammatical categories and linguistic syntax, morphology, and phonology to describe music as language (Feld and Fox 1994). Cognitive and structuralist models of music as language have grown from the historical discourse centered and pragmatic approaches to culture (Feld and Fox 1994; Silverstein 1979; Urban 1991) by studying the ethnography of speaking (Bauman and Sherzer 1975, 1989; Feld and Fox 1994; Hymes 1974), performance studies (Bauman 1977; Feld and

Fox 1994), sociolinguistics (Duranti 1988; Feld and Fox 1994), ethnopoetics (Feld and Fox 1994; Hymes 1981; Sherzer and Woodbury 1987; Tedlock 1983), and studies of language socialization (Feld and Fox 1994; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984). Language in music describes the phenomenological networking of language and music in musical performance, song texts, and verbal art (Feld and Fox 1994). Music in language uses a perspective of musical dimensions such as rhythm, tempo, and voice quality to describe music in language (Feld and Fox 1994). Finally, language about music uses a perspective of how music has an omnipresence of aesthetics and how the musical aesthetic stimuli create technical discourse about music (Feld and Fox 1994).

The division between cognitivist formalism and phenomenological functionalism creates a wide range of theoretical opinions on musical meaning creation, but does not define the meaning of a violent song (Feld and Fox 1994). The listener interprets the song, and some listeners use the sound to create musical meaning while others use the lyrics to create musical meaning (Feld and Fox 1994). The structure and meaning of a song's text create a verbal content which is sung using a poetic performance creating verbal art that violence can be part of, just like in classical music (Anonymous 1997; Feld and Fox 1994).

Journalism: Fiction or Fact

For the purpose of my study, I examined the field of journalism to unpack how journalists write about and describe the meaning of violent music. This portion of my study is only interested in what is written about violent music and not how the violent music is consumed because different neurological functions are required if the listener is just hearing the violent music or if the listener is also viewing images that relate to the

lyrics of a violent song (Armstrong 2013; Levitin 2007; Zunshine 2012). One problem with studying music is that it is polysemic and communicates a message on many different neurological levels at the same time while films do not produce the same effect, but both are considered art forms (Armstrong 2013; Garofalo 2009; Levitin 2007; Zunshine 2012). Some researchers may be suspicious of a research project that only studies violent lyrics as a way of communicating the musical message of the song, which is why this study is only concerned with how journalism writes about the meaning of violent music in newspapers, magazines, and television programs, especially before the computerized mass-media boom (Garofalo 2009).

Moral entrepreneurs and their not normal perceptions. Moral entrepreneurs create social movement organizations by making claims that something is a scourge against society and using published rhetoric to define the moral decay of society (Ballard and Coates 1995; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). Moral entrepreneurs define what is normal in society, and if an individual or type of music goes against the norm, it is considered deviant (Ballard and Coates 1995; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). Popular music has been under attack by moral entrepreneurs since musical styles began to blend together (Bayles 1994; Dotter 1994; Gillet 1983; Kotarba et al. 2013; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). The blending of the music also included the blending of musicians who were of different skin color and who would corrupt the minds of the white middle-class youths (Bayles 1994; Dotter 1994; Gillet 1983; Kotarba et al. 2013; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000).

Beginning in the 1930s, moral entrepreneurs, with the backing of journalists who would publish their rhetoric, made claims that Swing and Jazz music were dangerous because of the sexual arousal created by dancing to the music (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000).

During the 1950s, when American youths were introduced to rock and roll, the moral entrepreneurs made claims that the white middle-class youth would engage in deviant sexual behavior because of the driving beat of the music, which would lead to white middle-class youths' defiance and rebellion (Ballard and Coates 1995; Bleich, Zillman, and Weaver 1991; Pareles and Romanowski 1983; Trzcinski1992). Heavy Metal started to become popular during the 1960s, but the music was considered deviant because of its loud, guitar-driven sound and provocative nature of the lyrics that promoted political rebellion and drug use (Arnett 1991a, 1991b; Ballard and Coates 1995; Bayles 1994; Dotter 1994; Gillet 1983; Kotarba et al. 2013; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000; Pareles and Romanowski 1983). In the 1970s, Rap music was beginning to appear but only on the streets and clubs in New York City, and it became a recorded art form in the early 1980s (Ballard and Coates 1995; Pareles and Romanowski 1983). When Rap music became a recorded art form, it was only popular with the African American youths because the white middle-class youth did not understand the diverse lifestyle of the artist who was described in the lyrics of their songs (Ballard and Coates 1995; Simpson 1990). Rap music became mainstream music in the mid-1980s, but it was still considered deviant music because of its behavior descriptions of gun clapping, physical beating, and slasher flick-style horror core lyrics that went against the norms of society (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000; Media Criminal Justice blogspot.com 2014).

Parents Music Resource Center: Their interpretation of the First Amendment. The majority of research over the last 30 years has studied lyrics to popular songs from an adult interpretation and perception (Fried 1999; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). A study performed by Robinson and Hirsch (1969) found that high

school and college students' perceptions and interpretations of musical themes differ from these of adults (Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). Hirsch (1971) studied how songs of the 1940s and 1950s dealt with topics of traditional love and sex, and how the song lyrics of the 1960s and 1970s introduced social protest, drugs, and a nontraditional approach to love and romance (Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). During the 1980s, the song lyrics began to focus on physical love, but adults interpreting song lyrics performed all of these studies, making the assumption that teenagers would interpret song lyrics the same way adults do (Fedler, Hall, and Tanza 1982; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). Beginning in 1985, Heavy Metal music became the primary target of a group of moral entrepreneurs known as the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), and by the mid-1980s, Rap music also became targeted by the PMRC because of song lyrics that glamorized violence (Ballard and Coates 1995; Fried 1999; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987).

The attention given by the media to song lyrics in popular music contributed to the payola scams of the 1950s, a drop-out society of juvenile delinquents of the 1960s and 1970s, and a violent, homicidal, suicidal, satanic, sexually aggressive society of the 1980s and beyond (Ballard and Coates 1995; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). The media, with the help of anti-music organizations, printed and preached the sinful impact of popular music, which led to congressional hearings in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Ballard and Coates 1995; Fong-Torres 1973; Jones 1991; McDonald 1988; Orman 1986). The media was used by the PMRC to portray Heavy Metal music lyrics as dangerous with sexist endorsements and pornographic values that exhibited occult messages, which would cause violent, lawless behavior (Ballard and Coates 1995;

Markson 1990) Tipper Gore, the wife of Vice President Al Gore, became the face of the PMRC and created news worthy interest in the evils of Heavy Metal song lyrics by describing the lyrics as a health risk to the youth who listened to it (Ballard and Coates1995; McDonald 1988). When Tipper Gore announced that listening to the lyrics of Heavy Metal music would lead to unprotected sex, the use of dangerous drugs, and suicide, this announcement produced worldwide media coverage of Heavy Metal music, which led to congressional hearings concerning the lyrics of Heavy Metal songs (Ballard and Coates 1995; Gore 1987). It also increased the sales of Heavy Metal albums (Ballard and Coates 1995).

Before the World Wide Web, information sharing was limited to written text and local nightly news, so song lyrics were not easily obtained unless published in or on the album cover, which was not yet required by law (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). Starting in 1988, the PMRC spotlighted Rap music as being dangerous because it promoted misogyny, violence, and underage sexual activity (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). The negative media coverage of Heavy Metal and Rap music was endorsed by organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA), the American Family Association (AFA), the National Political Congress of Black Women (NPCBW), the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAAPC), and the National Rainbow Coalition NRC), which all tried to create a moral panic by boycotting Heavy Metal and Rap music (Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). By 1994, Congressional hearings were held to determine if regulations were required on “gangsta” Rap music lyrics due to their deviant message (Fried 1999; Holland 1994; Lynxwiler and Gay 2000). However,

according to *The Brechner Report* (1992), the regulation of Heavy Metal and Rap music lyrics was found to be a type of censorship that violated free speech, artistic expression, and the First Amendment that would unconstitutionally use the court system for the regulation enforcement (Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). A compromise was reached when the recording industry volunteered to put warning labels on albums with lyrics that the moral entrepreneurs deemed deviant and a danger to society (Ballard and Coates 1995; Thigpen 1993). But, the warning label increased the album sales because all of the Congressional hearings were using an adult interpretation of popular song lyrics (Ballard and Coates 1995; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987; Thigpen 1993).

Perceptions starting with Plato. The writings of Plato (428/427 or 424/423 BCE-348/347 BCE) warned about how music could influence the youth culture. In the post-modern society, the easiest way to determine if a youth has entered adolescence is to determine if the youth has developed a passion for popular music, which begins at an average age of 10 years old (Kotarba et al. 2013; O'Toole 1997). The meanings that adolescents create about song lyrics are determined by what stage of life she or he is in, not the media message that adolescent life is a stage of life that produces crisis, rebellion, and conflict (O'Toole 1997). Individuals generally have no real interpretation of song lyric meaning, only song lyric meaning construction created by knowledge that the individual has already obtained (O'Toole 1997). Prinsky and Rosenbaum (1987:387) performed a study using 266 college students and found that of the songs the students selected as being their favorites, only 37 percent could be discussed according to the lyrical meaning because the common response was "I don't listen to the words, only the sound." Others reported that the only reason they listen to the song is for the beat and the

ability to dance to the song while having no clue to the meaning of the lyrics (Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). These findings confirmed the results of Robinson and Hirsch (1969), who also reported that 70 percent of 770 high-school students were more aware of the sounds a song created than the meaning of the lyrics (Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). From these studies, the researchers concluded that respondents who provided a description of a song only had a very superficial understanding of the meaning of the lyrics because of the complex symbolism and metaphors used in the lyrics, which are not commonly understood when listening to a song (Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). With the help of the media, Bruce Springsteen can sing "Born in the U.S.A." or "Fortunate Son" and most listeners cannot tell you the meaning of the song, even though they are considered American anthems (Greenfield, Bruzzone, Koyamatsu, Satuloff, Nixon, Brodie, and Kingsdale 1987; Prinsky and Rosenbaum 1987). Media sources like to describe Heavy Metal and Rap music lyrics as disturbing and deviant so that the people will be less likely to listen (Lonsdale and North 2011).

Brain priming using Heavy Metal music. Starting in 1992 with the release of "Cop Killer" by Ice T and his band Body Count, politicians including Vice-President Dan Quayle and Jesse Jackson, as well as, the PMRC, police departments, and PTAs all condemned the song because it glamorized violence against the police (Fried 1999; Leland 1992; Light 1993). The media provided the vehicle that helped agents of social control to create a national panic using the argument that the song, "Cop Killer," was such a threat to the national health of the United States that police departments threatened to sell off investments in the record label Time Warner and even sue the record company over the content of the song (Fried 1999; Leland 1992; Light 1993). Moral entrepreneurs

and parents became concerned over the effects of lyrics on their children and the potential for Rap music to prime violent crimes in the schools and streets (Fried 1999; Leland 1992; Light 1993). After several weeks of pressure from agents of social control, Ice T pulled the album from store shelves, removed the song, and cancelled stadium and concert-hall performances (Fried 1999; Leland 1992; Light 1993).What is missing from the research is how the media helped moral entrepreneurs violate the First Amendment, but First Amendment violation by journalists is not the focus of my research.

One mystery of the PMRC is why it created harsh public criticism of Rap and Heavy Metal music but not against Country music even though Country music more commonly has lyrics that deal with violence and misogyny (Fried 1999). One answer to the question is that Country music is a primary form of music that is considered White music, so the lyrics of Rap music are judged more harshly because Rap music is associated with Black artists and Black culture (Fried 1999). A study conducted by Fried (1999) used the lyrics of a Rap song and told some of the respondents that the lyrics were from a Rap song while other respondents were told the lyrics were from a Country song. The results demonstrated that when the lyrical passage was identified as a Rap song, there were negative reactions to the lyrics compared to when the lyrics were portrayed as being from a Country or Folk song. The media has built a perception that Rap and Heavy Metal music will lead to violence and anti-social behavior because musical lyrics will prime the listener to perform deviant acts (Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks 2003; Brummert, Lennings, and Warburton 2011). Ice T also claims that the album *Body Count* is a Heavy Metal album and not Rap, but people believe that Black artists cannot produce Heavy Metal music (Fried 1999; Leland 1992; Light 1993).

The purpose of my study is not to compare violent visual and auditory media effects, but to norm the concept of a violent song through the experience and perception of the audience member. Much of the research from journalism centers on violent music lyrics priming the listener to behave defiantly, but the tone of the song is also important. Some of the research on violent music makes suggestions that the violent musical "tone," and not the song's lyrics, will influence aggressive behavior in the listener because of the arousal created by the tone of the song (Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks 2003a; Christenson and Roberts 1998; Christenson, Roberts, and Gentile 2003). Also, some Heavy Metal lyrics are so garbled that they cannot be understood (Anderson et al. 2003a; Christenson and Roberts 1998; Roberts, Christenson, and Gentile 2003). Research on violent musical tone and lyrics from a journalistic point of view is limited because of how violent music is consumed in the twenty-first century and how the consumption will prime aggression and violence (Anderson et al. 2003a; Anderson, Benjamin, and Bartholow 1998). Journalists are part of the mass media, which include television, violent musical videos, violent musical tones, and playing combat video games (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, and Wartella 2003b). Editors, who may be influenced by moral entrepreneurs, influence journalists. The journalists write columns about how they perceive Rap and Heavy Metal music and if and when it will prime the listener to commit the violent acts contained in the lyrics of the song. However, journalists do not name what a violent song is, only how they perceive violent music and how it will lead to anti-social deviant behavior (Anderson et al. 2003b).

Religion: Christian Heavy Metal is Sacred

Music such as Gregorian chants, Protestants hymns, the Muslim *Madih nabawl,* and the Hindu *kirtan* are just a few examples to show how religious practices use music for worship and devotion (Clark 2006). The Mantaro Region of Highland Peru uses music to perform festive and religious rituals (Long 2013), and Christian Rock music as a sub-culture of religious music is used in modern society for religious practices. All of these types of music have religious themes and imagery that has been lost in modern popular music (Howard 1992).

In the 1960s, some pop songs like The Birds' "Turn, Turn, Turn," Elvis' "Crying in the Chapel," and Ocean's "Put Your Hand in the Hand" had success on the pop charts, but songs started to change in the early 1970s (Baker 1985; Howard 1992). Jesus or religious themes were mentioned less and less (Baker 1985; Howard 1992). Conservative Christian groups have had a "love/hate relationship" with Heavy Metal music because it has been given a reputation of corrupting the Christian moral values of society (Howard 1992:123). However, some Heavy Metal groups like Stryper or Amy Grant pair the Gospel message with popular music and receive no warning label on their recordings because the artists represent Christianity, not popular secular music (Howard 1993).

Heavy Metal music has always been labeled as having a violent satanic message, but the message was hidden in the music so the listener only became aware of the message by playing the record backwards (Kotarba et al. 2013). According to Orthodox Photos (2014), different forms of violence are appearing in modern popular music, but the message is no longer hidden. Early Heavy Metal artists like Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath were often accused of encouraging the youth culture to practice worshipping

violence and evil (Kotarba et al. 2013). But, modern Heavy Metal bands like Iron Maiden and Slayer use lyrics that encourage the youth culture to perform acts of sadistic violence (Orthodox Photos 2014). The National Council of Churches published findings revealing that the growing aggression of youth behavior is a direct result of the violent content of music (USA Today 1985).

Religious music like hymns are considered an art form that provides a "religious use of music, as well as a musical use for religion" (Shepherd 1972:3). Yet, conservative Christian groups do not differentiate between the sound and lyrics of a song, only how the group perceives the song (Lynch 2006). These groups believe that the sound and lyrics encourage violent sexual behavior. If a song has loud beating drums, it is violent; if the lyrics are suggestive, the song is sexual. According to the conservative Christian groups, a violent sexual song is perceived according to the Christian concept of *good vs. evil* (Kotarba et al. 2013). Contemporary Christian music artists, which include Christian Hard Rock, Dance, Pop, Adult Contemporary, and Hip Hop, all promote their music by using the same marketing practices as Heavy Metal and Rap artists, but the gatherings for Christian groups are sacred festivals held in churches and not Heavy Metal concerts held in stadiums (Lindenbaum 2012). Some mega churches that use Christian Rock as a part of their religious rituals are as big as stadiums, but Christian Heavy Metal is different because of the religious message in the lyrics, even if the Christian Heavy Metal song is driven by a thumping beat (Kotarba et al. 2013).

Christian Heavy Metal is labeled sacred, so it is not classified as part of the popular culture in which "the music industry shamelessly promotes promiscuity…family dysfunction and divorce…and the deadly message that kids know better than their doltish

and irrelevant parents" (Medved 1992:41). The music industry has made a distinction between Christian and non-Christian music, even if the music is similar-sounding and styled after popular music genres: one is sacred while the other is secular (Lindenbaum 2012). The literature seems to generalize that all popular music is violent because it lacks religious themes, imagery, and messages. Christian music, no matter how similar it is to popular music, is protected by its sacred genre classification.

Psychology: A Musical Twist of the Brain

Research on violent music in the field of psychology is extensive, so for the purpose of my literature review, the focus is how psychological research defines violent popular music. The discipline of psychology uses a series of different tests and scales that create quantitative data measuring body and brain responses to cognitive and aesthetic stimuli (Ali and Peynircioglu 2006). Some of the tools include fMRI, EEG, and HRV that measure brain and heart activity when hearing violent music (Berntson, Quigley, & Lozano 2007). Psychology researchers also use many different self-report scales that include forced choice format, rating scales, or free phenomenological description, which is based on such adjective lists as the Differential Emotional Scale, but the results are notoriously poor due to the unreliability of self-reporting of the phenomena (Lundqvist, Carlesson, Hilmersson, & Juslin 2009; Zwaag van der, Westerink; & van den Broek 2011). There is no interview with the listener to ask her or him why the song is violent, only a forced measurement from a predetermined scale (Berntson et al. 2007). With the uses of modern technology, psychology researchers can measure the emotional response of affective experience like happiness and sadness, and physiological adjustments to the stimuli that create expression of behavior (Lundqvist et al., 2009). According to

psychology, music causes emotions that are measured using visual tests, galvanized skin tests, and fMRI neuroimaging, but no agreeable definition for the meaning of a violent song exists (Lundqvist et al. 2009).

Popular music is special because the songs include melodic and lyrical information that can be measured independently of each other even though the two components are believed to enhance each other (Ali and Peynircioglu 2006). Some psychological studies focus on the negative behaviors and attitudes that are projected in the lyrics of popular songs (Ali and Peynircioglu 2006). Anderson et al. (2003) have produced correlations between negative behavior and Heavy Metal music with lyrics, but Ballard and Coates (1995) did not produce a relationship between Heavy Metal music with lyrics and negative behavior. According to Ali and Peynircioglu (2006:513), most studies to date that measure "the effects of the presence or absence of lyrics and the type of music was confounded" because the studies did not include control conditions to tease out the effects of the lyrics. But, the cognitive neo-associationist model suggests that the musical experience does not require semantic content to produce positive or negative emotions (Krahé and Bieneck 2012).

One area of psychological inquiry is how melody and/or lyrics affect both hemispheres of the brain (Ali and Peynircioglu 2006). Lyrics are processed in the left hemisphere of the brain where tonal melodies are produced as pleasant, but the right hemisphere produces negative emotional unpleasant meanings of atonal melodies (Ali and Peynircioglu 2006). Previous research on neuroimaging has shown that emotional response to music involves several areas of the brain that includes the amygdale, thalamus, and hippocampus. MRIs produce neuroimages of how the brain contrasts

consonant/dissonant, happy/sad, and pleasant/unpleasant according to the listener's experience with the music (Chapin, Jantzen, Kelso, Steinberg, and Large 2010). However, with music and emotions, a researcher must recognize the paradox that listeners may enjoy the cathartic experience produced by listening to negative music (Schubert 2012).

Neuroimaging: Geographical Mapping of the Brain's Landscape and Countryside

The norming of a violent song is only one part of a larger interdisciplinary project that seeks to measure brain activity when listening to violent music to predict individual behavior. The first idea to accomplish the interdisciplinary project is to measure brain waves by neuroimaging, which is a term used for taking pictures of the brain, brain waves, and brain activities (Zago, Lorusso, Ferrucci, Priori 2013). There are different types of neuroimaging, so this project would use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to measure brain activity when listening to a violent song. Functional MRI is a neuroimage of the brain that demonstrates the correlations between physical changes, like blood flow to the brain, with the mental function, created by the blood flow, while performing cognitive tasks (Nierhaus, Margulies, Long, and Villringer 2012). Some of the main issues with fMRI are cost and gaining access to the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment if an institution does not own a MRI machine.

Electroencephalogram: EEG. Another way that brain activity can be measured is by an electroencephalogram (EEG). Electroencephalogram is a test that detects electrical activity in the brain using brain cells that communicate via electrical impulses and are active all the time; even when the individual sleeps, the brain activity shows up as wavy lines on an EEG recording (Stern 2013). The trouble with using an EEG to measure brain

activity when listening to violent music is that the listener must attach flat metal discs (electrodes) to her or his scalp by wearing a skull cap with many electrode sensors attached to the skull cap. If the skull cap does not fit properly and electrodes are loose, the test could produce unreliable results. Also, the listener must use headphones to hear the music, and, electrically, each component interferes with the other making the results unreliable.

Cardiovascular psychophysiological responses: How the body beats. The final way to measure brain activity addressed in this study is cardiovascular psychophysiological research that usually involves the brain, the mind, the heart, and how the body reacts when each is stimulated. There are many forms of measuring cardiovascular psychophysiological data such as how the eye pupil dilates when viewing certain pictures, how the skin sweats when certain brain stimuli are introduced, or how the heart rate of an individual varies when listening to violent music from other activities. Heart rate variability (HRV) refers to the beat-to-beat alterations in heart rate of an individual during any activity (Berntson et al. 2007). The HRV is collected by attaching electrodes to veins that measure the beat-to-beat of the heart when the brain is stimulated by cardiovascular psychophysiological activity like listening to violent music.

Meditation: The Intervening Variable

Forms of meditation range from transcendental meditation, loving-kindness meditation, compassion based meditation, and mindfulness meditation, but most forms of research focus on how these formalized meditations often require guidance to learn them properly (Grossman 2011; Morley 2014; Sedlmeier, Eberth, Zimmermann, Haarig, Jaeger, and Kunze 2012). Meditation is being researched as an intervening variable for

helping violent criminals control their impulses, and it has been determined that felons practicing transcendental meditation have a lower recidivism rate than those who do not (Rainforth, Alexander, and Cavanaugh 2003). Meditation was chosen for this project because it should decrease the sympathetic response elicited from violent music, which may alter psychological processes connected to the sympathetic nervous system. Mindfulness meditation is a Buddhist construct where mindfulness-based intervention is used to allow the meditator beyond the *ego* image and become enlightened (Grossman 2011). Mindfulness meditation is equated to the mundane and unnoticed of everyday life, but the meditator wakes up to what life really is beyond the ups and downs of everyday life (Grossman 2011). Mindfulness meditation allows the mediator to cultivate a special way of looking at life because she or he has been trained to view life exactly as it is, and accept it without complaint (Grossman 2011). According to Grossman (2011):

> Mindfulness is a deliberate open-minded awareness of moment-to-moment perceptible experiences that ordinarily require gradual refinement by means of systematic-practice; is characterized by a nondiscursive, nonanalytic investigation of ongoing experience; is fundamentally sustained by such attitudes as kindness, tolerance, patience, and courage, and is marked differently from everyday modes of awareness (P.1035).

Researching meditation and how it affects violent behavior may lead to a new methodology for assisting felons who are at risk for repeat violent behavior.

Sociology: My Major and Thesis Perspective

The sociology of music incorporates a range of theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, and purposes. Music serves as a "powerful form of expression" (Blau 2001:883) in everyday life. However, little is known about individual behavior when selecting music (Krause, North, and Hewitt 2014). With the use of modern technology, individuals can store and access huge numbers of songs ensuring control over what is

being listened to, so she or he can create her or his own meaning for a particular song (Krause et al. 2014). Music is "*prend aux tripes*" or "hits you in the guts" (Levi-Strauss 1975:28) and builds on emotions; it is unbound, open, and always becoming (Lonsdale and North 2011; Roy and Dowd 2010). According to musicologist, Christopher Small (1998:2), "Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do." Music is better at serving the different needs of different individuals than other leisure activities (Lonsdale and North 2011).

Classifying music as an object or activity may set it apart and make it a self-contained form of social life because music is a part of, as well as inseparable from, social life (Bohlman 1999). Music is used to express and represent social meanings, but the meanings of music are constructed based on individual taste, and the individual's meaning is embedded in her or his socialization (Etzkorn 1964; Roy and Dawd 2010). The construction of meaning becomes complicated because music cannot be solely judged as an object or activity (Roy and Dowd 2010). DeNora (2000) has insightfully categorized researchers who study music as an object as *textualists,* and researchers who study music as an activity as *contextualists*.

Textualists: Words to Describe Words

Textualists perceive music as analogous to language and study song lyric meanings through an interpretation of one set of words (the lyrics) and describe the interpretation of the lyrics by using other words (Roy and Dawd 2010). Words have meanings while basic musical notes have very little meaning, so textualists focus on the structure of music to establish the meaning of the music (DeNora 2003). McClary (1991) describes the meaning between the musical structure (text) and social life (context) as

interplay of music. For example, Hip Hop lyrics can be perceived as helping to construct an environment where violent behavior is condoned, but the artist may have had different intentions for the lyrics (McClary 1991). In other words, listeners' perceptions may have led to the belief that there is a deviant nature to the song's lyrics (Kubrin 2005). The meaning of violence that is attached to the musical structure of Hip Hop is connected to the structure of the inner city (Kubrin 2005) because music meaning has a shared significance that points to some social structure beyond the music (Griswold 1987). The textualists use music structure as a form of performer/audience relationships that focus on music lyrics as having a literary plot and use a dominant masculine pitted against a subordinate feminine resolving the conflict in the usual masculine manner (Roy and Dowd 2010). Textualists also study the musical structure of national anthems of different countries to determine the relationship between the notes of the anthems and how they have gained a political meaning (Roy and Dawd 2010). One criticism of the textualists is that they "often conflate ideas about music's affect with the ways that music actually works for and is used by its recipients instead of exploring how such links are forged by situated actors" (DeNora 2000:22).

Contextualists: Individuals to Describe Words

The contextual approach is different than the textual approach because it primarily focuses on the listener, who usually goes unnoticed in the textual approach to music meaning (Roy and Dawd 2010). Contextualists argue that researchers should think "beyond reading of music" (Roy and Dawd 2010:189) and focus on "the primacy of symbolic action in an ongoing intersubjective lifeworld, and the ways engagement in symbolic action continually builds and shapes actors' perceptions and meanings" (Feld

1984:383). Contextualists maintain that music meaning is never in the music because music never really has a meaning (Roy and Dawd 2010). For instance, some listeners may dislike Rap lyrics because of the violent content, but the lyrics are reduced to that listener's particular meaning and perception of the lyrics (Binder 1993). Other listeners may perceive the lyrics as a significant and needed social critique that serve as a basis for political mobilization or new form of emerging art (Binder 1993; Watkins 2001). Contextualists express that Rap lyrics promoting violence have little to do with the sound or lyrics of the song; instead, the violence of the song is produced by how the listeners perceive the song because music meanings help to inform the listeners of who they are and the environment that surrounds them (Roy and Dowd 2010).

Musical meaning helps individuals create a self-identity or a "me" for the individual, by using music to establish relationships, determine important and memorable events, and negotiate everyday life situations by linking musical text and context to their evolving everyday life autobiographies (DeNora 2000). However, musical meaning that an individual make as listeners may be different than the meaning the artist makes when composing the song, based on different interactions with others (DeNora 2000). Individuals use music to create a "deliberate meaning-making process" (Roy and Dawd 2010: 189) or "technology of the self" in which listeners set themselves apart from others (DeNora 2000; Kotarba et al. 2013). Some listeners may use classical music as background noise while reading a book and not because it "resonates with the flow of time" (Berger 2007). Groups also use music to create an identity or an "us," and the music is used to identify individuals inside, as well as outside the group, because group membership is based on total emersion in the particular music (Roy 2002; Roy and Dawd

2010). Music can be used as a form of "technology of the collective" because individuals will gravitate toward music scenes (Kotarba et al. 2013) where others share their like-minded taste, perceptions, and meaning for popular music (Bourdieu 1984; Roy 2002; Roy and Dawd 2010). Groups also use music taste to define themselves. It sets them apart, and sometimes against, others in society, but can also create group sprawl of *us-ness* and establish collectives in far-away places (Bourdieu 1984; Kahn-Harris 2007; Roy 2002; Roy and Dawd 2010). However, a sociological approach would describe popular music as sounds and lyrics that are subjected to the situational interpretation and perception of the person who is interpreting the lyrics or listening to the music, so the meaning of violent popular music can change according to an individual's perception of her or his *self*, and how the self interprets violent popular music.

Toward A Science of Violent Popular Music

The team of researchers from Texas State determined that the best contribution sociology could make to this interdisciplinary project would be to assemble an inventory of violent songs that would be used for the HRV study introducing a sociological sensibility to the otherwise formulaic process. A pilot study was needed to measure the cardiovascular psychophysiological (HRV) effect to the listener after mindfulness meditation while listening to a violent song before using the song in the fMRI pilot program. However, team members disagreed on how to choose the violent music. Some team members believed that lyrics matter more than sound, other team members believed that sound matters more because lyrics are not easily understood, and other members argued that popular music should be used instead of classical music. Concerns over what musical criteria to use when choosing the violent song became problematic, and who

should be making the choice. Dr. Kotarba suggested that the team explore violent music as meaningful behavior, so a determination was made that if the HRV project was going to use undergraduate students as subjects, a meaning of violent music according to undergraduate students' perspectives was needed so the researchers do not have to be concern about choosing a correct contemporary meaning of a violent song/music. Meaningful behavior is a perspective that constructs meaning according to interaction and individual agency (Kotarba 2013). These meaning are attached to behaviors in social life, and some believe that all behavior is meaningful behavior (Kotarba 2013). However, the meanings are constructed according to interaction (Kotarba 2013). Researchers may interact with others who create a meaning of violent music that is not constructed according to the same perspective of violence music used by undergraduate students. Whether the song has a positive or negative effect on the listener, the listener uses her or his perception of the song to create a shared community experience because "music arouses similar ideas in different brains" (Levi-Strauss 1975:28). For the purpose of my thesis, the sociological focus will be on how individuals perceive the meaning of violent popular music according to their own perception of violent music because individuals use music as a way of giving meaning to themselves and the world that engulfs their everyday lives (Roy and Dowd 2010).

Individuals spend significant money and time consuming music for many different reasons (Lonsdale and North 2011). Lonsdale and North performed four "uses and gratifications" studies to measure individuals' reasons for listening to music but not how the individuals determine their meaning of violent music (2011). One important finding by Lonsdale and North (2011:108) is that individuals "listen to music primarily to

manage/regulate their moods; different ages may listen to music for different reasons, but the reasons change as the individual ages." Some social scholars treat music as an object, which is "a thing that has a moment of creation, a stability of characteristics across time and place, and potential for use and effects" (Roy and Dowd 2010). The literature also treats music as different types of objects that range from "music as an institutionalized system of tonality" to "music as a commodity" (Roy and Dowd 2010: 185). Listening to music can also be measured as a leisure activity, which is measured as a process without fixed qualities, so it never achieves the status of an object.

3. METHODOLOGY

A General Meaning of "What is a Violent Song"

The purpose of my project was to generate a definition of a violent song by using the norming process. Once the norming process was completed, the general normed meaning of a violent song was compared to popular music literature, such as *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Faire* and how these publications' meaning of a violent song compares to the undergraduates' norming process of meaning for a violent song. Popular literature, surveys, and a focus group were used for this norming process to provide explanations of terms and song suggestions that fit each respondent's response. Once the norming process was complete, Mr. Bernard D. Glowinski and Dr. Joseph A. Kotarba, assembled a list of five violent songs, according to the selected population's suggested meanings of a violent song.

Using the general meaning and definition of a violent song that was constructed, five violent songs were chosen to be used in a pending pilot heart rate variability (HRV) mindfulness meditation project that will be conducted by an interdisciplinary research team at Texas State. The mindfulness meditation study will use two groups of respondents. Group one will be trained for 20 minutes in guided mindfulness meditation while group two will not be trained in mindfulness meditation. Before the test, respondents in group one will be asked to meditate according to their mindfulness mediation training while group two will be relaxing. The length of time to meditate before the test has yet to be determined. The respondents in both groups will then be attached to HRV data collection equipment, and the respondents will listen to the chosen violent song. Data will be collected using HRV equipment to measure the effect of a

violent song on individuals who have mindfulness meditation training and meditate before hearing a violent song versus those who do not. The second group of respondents will be used as the control group.

Methodology for My Project

The Internal Review Board (IRB) at Texas State University exempted my study from their review. I did not collect respondents' names or student identifications. I did not offer extra credit for the first survey to the students to participate in the project because if they chose not to fill out the survey, they could use the class time to review notes or otherwise. However, the second survey offered extra credit to online students to ensure participation. My study used two surveys and a focus group to collect descriptive qualitative data on experiences, feelings, meanings, and perceptions associated with violent music (Esterberg 2002) according to the selected population of undergraduate sociology students at Texas State. In particular, this study was interested in their opinions about what they consider to be violent music, so the results could be used to norm a violent song.

For the first survey, I had to personally contact the course instructors for Sociology 1310 to determine how many students each course contained and to see if the instructors would allow me to hand out a survey during their class-time. After gaining permission from the instructors to hand out my survey to their classes, I determined that the five courses had well over the two hundred respondents needed for this project, roughly 30 to 70 students per class. The two classes on April 27 and 28, 2015, were selected because they were scheduled back-to-back and this hopefully prevented the students in both courses discussing the survey and its contents. Only one class was

needed on April 29, 2015, to fulfill the needed 200 surveys. The dates to distribute the survey were set to coincide with the end of the Spring 2015 semester so that course review days could be used and no classroom instruction time would be used filling out my survey.

The recruitment took place when the undergraduate students gathered for class and the offer to participate in the survey was made by the study coordinator (Mr. Bernard D. Glowinski). I informed students of the study and its procedures prior to participation so that each participant could make an educated decision regarding their participation in the study. The potential respondents were informed that the survey was needed to form a better understanding of college students' music preferences and what kinds of music are violent. Those who did not wish to participate could decline to complete the survey. I encouraged potential participants to contact the study coordinator via email if they had any questions about the study.

The collected descriptive survey data produced meanings attached or attributed to a violent song that were then used to generate a general meaning of violent popular music. In order to achieve this, there was a need to understand the selected populations' individual perspective of violent music to arrive at a valid general meaning of violent music. My sociological research sought to measure the differences among the respondents and how violent music lies in the bigger spectrum of the music experience. Surveys were used to measure how different students perceive violent music subjectively and not collectively. To create a general meaning of a violent song, the symbolic interactionist paradigm was used to inductively arrive at musical meaning because of

reflection and competence of the music. The survey data created a general meaning for a violent song through the norming process, symbolic interaction, and the pragmatic self.

Collecting the rich descriptive data. My sociological research sought to measure the differences among the respondents and how violent music lies on the bigger spectrum of the music experience. Surveys were used to measure how different students perceive violent music through the norming process.

With the help of the instructors and their graduate assistants, we handed out the surveys. Students in all three classes appeared to be attentive and did not talk among themselves when completing the survey. Some students also used their iPhones to help complete the survey, but these students also took longer to complete the survey. The surveys were collected as soon as they were completed; the average class time for participating in completing the survey was 24 minutes. I thanked the students, graduate assistants, and the instructors for their assistance and exited the class rooms.

The First Survey

The first survey contained 21 close-ended questions with probes to be used for norming a violent song according to the selected respondents. The first question was used to number each completed survey. The next four questions on the survey were used to collect general demographic data that included gender, age, education level, and major. The following five questions asked for grade point average, religious affiliation, and ethnicity, or Hispanic heritage to ascertain socio-cultural variation in perception of violent music. Questions eleven and twelve focused on veteran status. Questions thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen were intended to explore the possibility that individuals who have formal music training may create a meaning of violent music according to the major and

minor musical scales and not a particular music genre. Questions sixteen through twenty-one were used to collect each respondent's music preference and each respondent's meaning of a violent song. The data from all questions was used in the norming of a violent song according to the individual respondents.

This approach allowed each respondent to provide numerous examples of violent song experiences, feeling, meanings, and perceptions. Statistical Programs for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data, create frequencies, and means averages to determine correlations and variances between the survey questions and produced categories.

The Second Survey

The first survey produced many different conceptual understandings and meanings for a violent song, but the issues I found are that very few respondents stated what they were feeling while listening to a violent song. In order to explore the actual feeling that are assigned to violent music and arrive at a sociological normed definition of a violent song, follow-up questions were needed to directly ask respondents how the music they perceive to be violent affects their feelings as listeners and what affect of the violent songs have on them. The second survey was unplanned, but follow-up questions were distributed to a random online Popular Culture and Music course in the Department of Sociology at Texas State. The follow-up survey was used and offered by the professor of the course, who is the co-researcher for this project. The respondents to the second survey had similar demographics as the respondents to the first survey used for this project. The responses to the second survey were used to determine the effect of violent music on the listener's feelings and behaviors. Students respond to incentives (Levitt and

Dubner 2009), so 10 points of extra-credit was offered to the students who participate in the survey. This online Popular Culture and Music course offered other extra-credit musical assignments for those who did not wish to participate in the study. The follow-up survey asked respondents how listening to violent music affects the listener's experiences, feelings, and perceptions. The professor of the course offered the online questionnaire by asking his students to please think about the style or genre of music that leaves you with any of the following feelings when you hear it:

- The music makes you want to punch things.
- The music makes you sweat.
- The music pisses you off.
- The music is gruesome.
- The music makes you fantasize about death.
- The music offends you.
- The music is disturbing to you.
- The music makes your skin crawl.
- The music makes you feel aggressive.
- The music makes you feel negative towards God.
- The music scares you.
- What is the style or genre of music?
- What is it about this music that creates these feelings in you?
- Give an example of a singer or band who performs this style or genre of music?
- What is it about this singer or band that creates these feelings in you?
- Give an example of a particular song performed by this singer or band?
- How does this song create these feelings in you?

The Focus Group

Dr. Kotarba, the director of the Center of Social Inquiry at Texas State, invited me to attend a field trip for his on-line Sociology of Popular Music course. His intent was to help me better understand the new music terminology and sub-genres of bands normal undergraduate students consider violent. The class was held in a local establishment that

is known for its Hill-Country Music Scene connection, where locals and students alike are allowed to perform in the many open-mike nights. I just sat and listened to the class discourse, and afterwards, I formed a group to discuss the subject of violent music. When the class finished, I introduced myself and asked who wanted to talk about popular music. A group of students formed, so we went to the patio to talk music. Two of the students were wearing tee shirts that represented Powerviolence bands and they were both expert in helping to define music genres and the violent music experience. The focus group took place in a performer/listener scene, so performers who overheard the focus group's conversation felt they had expertise on the concept of violent music.

4. RESULTS

Rich Descriptive Data: The First Survey Breakdown

The goal of my study was to norm a violent song to be used in a mindfulness meditation project in the Department of Psychology at Texas State. My study used a survey as the instrument to measure the respondents' concepts of violent music. The first question on the survey was used to create the survey's count number. This number was used to determine how many surveys were completed. After collecting the surveys from all five classes, the surveys were mixed together and numbered according to how I grabbed the survey from the pile. The survey number was also used in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to transform the survey data into categories with data. The total number of respondents for this project was 238.

Question 2 asked for the respondents' gender. The question gender was coded males – 0, females – 1, and included 236 respondents with two missing cases. The label, male, included 90 respondents, or 37.8 percent, of the sample, and females, included 146 respondents, or 61.3 percent, of the sample.

Question 3 asked the respondents their age, and included 234 responses with four missing cases. The age in years of the sample set had a range from 18 to 32 years old with a mean average of 19.68 years and a standard deviation of 1.544 years.

Question 4 asked the respondents for their education level. The education level options included on the survey ranged from high school to graduate school. The variable level of education was labeled High-School – 0, Freshman – 1, Sophomore – 2, Junior – 3, Senior – 4, and Grad School – 5. The results from 237 respondents produced the following findings: High-School had one response, or 0.4 percent, of the sample;

Freshman had 99 responses, or 41.8 percent, of the sample; Sophomore had 73 responses, or 30.7 percent, of the sample; Junior had 51 responses, or 21.4 percent, of the sample; Senior had 13 responses, or 5.5 percent, of the sample; and grad school had no responses. The average classification for the level of education category is Sophomore.

Question 5 asked the respondents their major. This question included 241 total responses from 238 total surveys because some respondents marked a double major. Many of the college majors that are offered throughout the semester were listed, so the responses were put into ten categories. Label 1was *Bio/Che/MA* and contained 16 total respondents, which included biology with nine respondents, chemistry with five respondents, and mathematics with two respondents. Label 2 was *Business* and contained 20 total respondents, including business administration with eight respondents, business management with eight respondents, and accounting with four respondents. Label 3 was *Criminal Justice* with 25 total respondents. Label 4 was *Engineering/Computer Science* and contained seven total respondents, including engineering with four respondents and computer science with three respondents. Label 5 was *Health Care Professionals* and contained 34 total respondents, including family and child development with three respondents, health care with eight respondents, nursing with 11 respondents, and physical therapy with 12 respondents. Label 6 was *Liberal Arts* and contained 27 total respondents, including anthropology with two respondents, education with two respondents, English with three respondents, geography with two respondents, history with one respondent, political science with seven respondents, sociology with six respondents, social work with three respondents, and Spanish with one respondent. Label 7 was *Mass Communication* and contained 46 total respondents, including mass

communication with 12 respondents, mass media with nine respondents, public relations with six respondents, acting with 10 respondents, fashion design with five respondents, and music with four respondents. Label 8 was *Psychology* and contained 32 total respondents. Label 9 was *Sports Science/ Recreation Management* and contained 25 total respondents, including sports science with 23 respondents and recreation management with three respondents. Label 10 was *Undecided* and contained nine total respondents.

Question 6 asked for the respondents' grade point average. The question *grade point average* received 215 total respondents with 23 missing respondents, and a mean grade point average of 3.10 with a 0.492 standard deviation.

Question 7 asked the respondents if they had a religious affiliation. The question *religious affiliation* received 236 total respondents with 179, or 75.2 percent, of the respondents having a religious affiliation while 57, or 23.9 percent, of respondents did not have a religious affiliation. There were two missing respondents.

Question 8 asked the 179 respondents who have a religious affiliation to name their specific affiliation. The responses for specific religion affiliation were *Baptist* with six total responses, *Catholic* had 62 total responses, *Christian* had 68 total responses, *Church of Christ* had two total responses, *Follower of Christ* had two total responses, *Hindu* had one response, *Islam* had one response, *Jehovah Wittiness* had one response, *Jewish* had two total responses, *Non-Denominational* had 12 total responses, *Protestant* had six total responses, *Science* had one response, and *Seventh Day Adventists* had two total responses.

Question 9 asked the respondents their ethnicity by choosing from the ethnic labels American Indian or Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Asian, African American, White,

or Other. This question was turned into four different categories using the ethnic label, and used a measurement of selected/not selected because some respondent's self-identify multiple ethnic labels. However, because each ethnic label was turned into an individual category, the measurement resulted in a simple yes/no response to each ethnic label. One open-ended category labeled Other was added so the respondent could list an ethnic label that was not included in the survey selection. There were a total of 237 total respondents with one missing respondent. The *American Indian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander* label received 237 total responses of which 230, or 96.6 percent, were no; seven, or 2.9 percent, were yes; and one, or 0.4 percent, missing responses. The *African American* label received 237 total responses of which 196, or 82.4 percent, were no; 41, or 17.2 percent, were yes; and one, or 0.4 percent, missing responses. The *Asian* label received 237 total responses of which 230, or 96.6 percent, were no; seven, or 2.9 percent, were yes; and one, or 0.4, percent, missing responses. The *White* label received 237 total responses of which 88, or 37.0 percent, were no; 149, or 62.6 percent, were yes; and one, or 0.4 percent, missing responses. The ethnic label *Other* had Hispanic with 36, or 15.1 percent, of responses; Hispanic and Latino with one, or 0.4 percent, of responses; Latina with one, or 0.4 percent, of responses; Mexican with one, or 0.4 percent, of responses; Mexican American with one, or 0.4 percent, of responses, Nigerian with one, or 0.4 percent, of responses; and Panamanian with one, or 0.4 percent, of responses.

Question 10 asked the respondents if they were Hispanic. The question received 236 total respondents with 136, or 57.1 percent, of responses no; 100, or 42.0 percent, responses yes; and two, or 0.8 percent, missing respondents.

Question 11 asked the respondents if they were military veterans and received 237 total respondents of which 234, or 98.3 percent, responded no; three, or 1.3 percent, responded yes; and one, or 0.4 percent, missing respondents. Question 12 asked the respondents who are veterans if they were deployed to a combat zone. The three respondents who are veterans were deployed in combat zones.

Questions 13, 14, and 15 asked about the participants' musical experience. Questions 13 asked the respondents if they had any formal music training and received 236 total respondents with 122, or 51.3 percent, responded no; 114, or 47.9 percent, responded yes; and two, or 0.8 percent, missing respondents. Question 14 asked the respondents who had formal music training what instrument and amount of training time they had. Almost all musical instruments were mentioned, including the voice, but the piano was the instrument with the most responses. The amount of training time ranged from one month to nine years. Question 15 asked the respondents if they had self-taught music training, and 180 respondents had some self-teaching. The self-taught instruments were mostly pianos, guitars and ukuleles, and some brass instruments. The length of self-teaching time ranged from one month to six years.

Question 16 asked the respondents to indicate a preference for a particular music genre broken down into 14 preferred music genre categories. The preference levels of the categories were 1-7 with 1 being strongly dislike, 4 being neither like/dislike, and 7 being strongly like. The responses for each genre were averaged for mean of preference level. The 14 genre preference categories were: Alternative, Blues, Classical, Country, Dance and Electronica, Folk, Heavy Metal, Jazz, Pop, Rap and Hip Hop, Religious, Rock, Soul and Funk, and Soundtracks and Theme Songs

Alternative had a preference average of 5.00, and included a total of 231 respondents of which preference level 1 received 14, or 5.9 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 11, or 4.6 percent, of responses; preference 3 received 14, or 5.9 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 38, or 16.0 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 53, or 22.3 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 55, or 23.1 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 46, or 19.3 percent, of responses. There were seven, or 3.3 percent, missing responses.

Blues had a preference average of 4.00, and included a total of 232 respondents of which preference level 1 received 28, or 11.8 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 26, or 10.9 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 27, or 11.3 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 62, or 26.1 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 59, or 24.8 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 18, or 7.6 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 12, or 5.0 percent, of responses. There were six, or 3.9 percent, missing responses.

Classical had a preference average of 4.00, and included a total of 233 respondents of which preference level 1 received 32, or 13.4 percent, of the responses; preference level 2 received 23, or 9.7 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 18, or 7.6 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 56, or 23.5 percent, of the responses; preference level 5 received 66, or 27.7 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 17, or 7.1 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 21, or 8.8 percent, of responses. There were five, or 2.1 percent, missing responses.

Country had a preference average of 5.00, and included a total of 234 respondents of which preference level 1 received 13, or 5.5 percent, of responses; preference level 2

received 22, or 9.2 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 18, or 7.6 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 32, or 13.4 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 39, or 16.4 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 44, or 18.5 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 66, or 27.7 percent, of responses. There were four, or 5.9 percent, missing responses.

Dance and Electronica had a preference average of 5.00, and included a total of 233 respondents of which preference level 1 received 22, or 9.2 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 22, or 9.2 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 25, or 10.5 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 39, or 16.4 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 54, or 22.7 percent, of responses; preference level six received 47, or 19.7 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 24, or 10.1 percent, of responses. There were five, or 2.1 percent, missing responses.

Folk had a preference average of 3.00, and included a total of 234 respondents of which preference level 1 received 63, or 26.1 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 21, or 8.8 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 36, or 15.1 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 56, or 23.5 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 36, or 15.1 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 12, or 5.0 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 11, or 4.6 percent, of responses. There were four, or 1.7 percent, missing responses.

Heavy Metal had a preference average of 2.00, and included a total of 232 respondents of which preference level 1 received 85, or 35.7 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 41, or 17.2 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 23, or 9.7 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 30, or 12.6 percent, of

responses; preference level 5 received 24, or 10.1 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 12, or 5.0 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 17, or 7.1 percent, of responses. There were six, or 2.5 percent, missing responses.

Jazz had a preference average of 4.00, and included a total of 231 respondents of which preference level 1 received 24, or 10.1 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 20. or 8.4 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 22, or 9.2 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 62, or 26.1 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 60, or 25.2 percent, of responses; preference level 6 receive 21, or 8.8 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 22, or 9.2 percent, of responses. There were seven, or 2.9 percent, missing responses.

Pop had a preference average of 6.00, and included a total of 231 respondents of which preference level 1 received 6, or 2.5 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 8, or 3.4 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 8, or 3.4 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 26, or 10.9 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 61, or 25.6 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 64, or 26.9 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 58, or 24.4 percent, of responses. There were seven, or 2.9 percent, missing responses.

Rap and Hip Hop had a preference average of 6.00, and included a total of 235 total respondents of which preference level 1 received 11, or 4.6 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 9, or 3.8 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 11, or 4.6 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 12, or 5.0 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 44, or 18.5 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received

56, or 23.5 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 92, or 38.7 percent, of responses. There were three or 1.3 percent, missing responses.

Religious had a preference average of 4.00, and included a total of 232 respondents of which preference level 1 received 25, or 10.5 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 41, or 17.2 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 20, or 8.4 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 53, or 22.3 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 40, or 16.8 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 26, or 10.9 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 27, or 11.3 percent, of responses. There were six, or 2.5 percent, missing responses.

Rock had a preference average of 5.00, and included a total of 234 respondents of which preference level 1 received 14, or 5.9 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 13, or 5.5 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 7, or 2.9 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 39, or 16.4 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 54, or 22.7 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 53, or 22.3 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 54, or 22.7 percent, of responses. There were four, or 1.7 percent, missing responses.

Soul and Funk had a preference average of 5.00, and included a total of 232 respondents of which preference level 1 received 14, or 5.9 percent, of responses; preference level 2 recieved16, or 6.7 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 20, or 8.4 percent, of responses; preference level 4 receiving 60, or 25.2 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 55, or 23.1 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 36, or 15.1 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 30, or 12.6 percent of responses. There were six, or 2.5 percent, missing respondents.

Soundtracks and Theme Songs had a preference average of 5.00, and included a total of 234 respondents of which preference level one received 12, or 5.0 percent, of responses; preference level 2 received 14, or 5.9 percent, of responses; preference level 3 received 15, or 6.3 percent, of responses; preference level 4 received 54, or 22.7 percent, of responses; preference level 5 received 53, or 22.3 percent, of responses; preference level 6 received 45, or 18.9 percent, of responses; and preference level 7 received 41, or 17.2 percent, of responses. There were four, or 1.7 percent, missing responses.

Question 17 asked the respondents what were their three favorite music styles. Many styles were offered, but the list was so extensive that to manage the data, the responses were classified into 15 new categories that included: Alternative, Blues, Classical, Classic Rock, Country, Electric Dance Music, Indie, Metal, Mexican Music, Pop, Rap and Hip-Hop, Religious, Rock, and Soundtracks and Show Tunes. The favorite music style labeled *Alternative* had 76 total respondents, which included Alternative with 63 responses, Alternative Asian with one response, Alternative Canadian Jam with one response, Alternative Punk with one response, Alternative Rock with nine responses, and Grunge with one response. *Blues* had 69 total respondents, which included Afro Beat with one response, Blues with 6 responses, Jazz with 13 responses, Reggae with six responses, Rhythm and Blues with 10 responses, and Soul and Funk with 10 respondents. *Classical* had 14 total respondents. *Classic Rock* had 28 total respondents, which included Classic Rock with 12 responses, Folk with 10 responses, Oldies 60s-80s with four responses, Psychedelic with one response, and SKA with one response. *Country* had 94 total respondents, which included Country with 91 responses, Bluegrass with two responses, and Americana Country with one response. *Electric Dance Music* had 37 total

respondents, which included Chill with one response, Dubstep with one response, Electric Dance Music (EDM) with 30 responses, Instrumental with one response, Swing with one response, Trance with two responses, and Washed with one response. *Indie* received 18 total responses. *Metal* had 17 total respondents, which included Emo with one response, Hardcore with one response, Heavy Metal with 8 responses, Progressive Rock with two responses, Punk with four responses, and Screamo with one response. *Mexican Music* had seven total respondents, which included Bando with 1 response, Bachata with two responses, and Tejano with four responses. *Other* had one respondent, which included Celtic. *Pop* had 84 total respondents. *Rap/Hip Hop* had 151 total respondents, which included Hip Hop with 45 responses, Rap with 52 responses, and Rap/Hip Hop with 54 responses. *Rock* had 48 total respondents. *Religious* had 24 total respondents, which included Christian Rock with seven responses, Christian Rap with one response, Gospel with four responses, and Religious with 12 responses. *Sound Tracks and Show Tunes* had six total respondents.

Question 18 asked the respondents if music or lyrics mattered more to them when listening to a song. This question received 233 total respondents. The categories *Music* received 99, or 41.6 percent, of responses; *Lyrics* received 96, or 40.3 percent, of responses; and *Other* received 38, or 16.0 percent, of the responses. There were 5, or 4.7 percent, missing respondents. The label *Other* included music and lyrics or both, which received 27 total responses, and affect, beat, feelings, emotions, genre, message, mood, production, rhythm, style, and tone each received one response.

Question 19 asked the respondents what make some music violent. This question was broken down into six categories to manage the data from the 238 respondents:

Combination of Music and Lyrics, Lyrics, Behavior, Music Instruments, No Music, and People. What makes some music violent labeled *Combination of Music and Lyrics* received 13 total responses. *Lyrics* received 187 total responses, which included gruesome lyrics with one response, language with 25 responses, lyrics with 69 responses, not understanding the lyrics with two responses, offensive language and cussing with 56 responses, screaming and yelling with 31 responses, and tone with three responses. *Behavior* received 23 total responses, which included acts against women with three responses, mosh pit with three responses, sex and drugs with five responses, and violent acts with 12 responses. *Music Instruments* received 70 total responses, which included beat with 14 responses, consonance with one response, dissonance with three responses, dark with one response, EDM with three responses, heavy metal instruments with three responses, instruments with14 responses, melody with one response, music with six responses, sound with 20 responses, and voice with four responses. *No Music* received 10 total responses. *People* received 21 total responses, which included artist with two responses, anger with five responses, culture with one response, feeling with five responses, and people with eight responses.

Question 20 asked the respondent what styles of music they considered violent, and why they consider that style to be violent. The styles of violent music from 238 respondents were broken down into seven categories: All Styles, All Metal and Hard Rock, All Rap and Hip-Hop, Alternative, No Styles, Screamo and Punk, and Other. The category *All Styles* with 26 total responses, *All Metal and Hard Rock* with 119 total responses, *All Rap and Hip Hop* with 90 total responses, *Alternative* with six total responses, which included EDM, Dubstep, and Drill, *No Styles* with15 total responses,

Scream-O and Punk with 30 total responses, and *Other* with eight total responses, which included Blues, Country, Classical, Pop, Religious, and movie sound tracks, all with one response.

The reasons these styles are perceived as violent were broken down into three categories, Lyrics, People, and Sound. *Lyrics* received 131 total respondents, which included against God with one response, message and image with 34 responses, screaming with 20 responses, and words with 76 responses. *People* received 34 total respondents, which included demographics with one response, lifestyle and culture with four responses, people with 20 responses, and violent behavior with eight responses. *Sound* received 55 total respondents, which included beat with four responses, instruments with 13 responses, loud with 30 responses, music consonance and dissonance with one response, speed and aggression with five responses, and tone with two responses.

Question 21 asked the respondents what they perceive to be a violent song, performer, and why. The results suggest that five categories—genre, performer, song, reason, and effect—can define a violent song individually. The genre categories were condensed into four categories, which included: Hard Rock, Heavy Metal, Rap and Hip Hop, and Other, as well as performers from each category. The violent music genre labeled *Hard Rock* received 31 total respondents, which included the performers: AC/DC with one response, Breaking Benjamin's with one response, Disturbed with two responses, Gwar with two responses, Iron Maiden with one response, Kiss with two responses, Korn with three responses, Led Zeppelin with one response, Lita Ford with one response, Marilyn Manson with six responses, Metallica with four responses, Ozzy

Osbourne with four responses, Pantera with one response, and Rob Zombie with two responses. The three performers with the most responses for being violent are Marilyn Manson with six responses, Metallica and Ozzy Osbourne with four responses each, and Korn with three responses. *Heavy Metal* received 32 total respondents, which included the performers Any Metal with one responses, Asking Alexandra with one response, Attila with one response, Avenged Seven Fold with two responses, Bring Me the Horizon with two responses, Chris Motionless with one response, Dead Earth Politics with one response, Death Grip with two responses, Escape the Fat with one response, Five Finger Death Punch with one response, God's Hate with one response, Job for a Cowboy with one response, Lamb of God with one response, Los Bukanas de Culiacan with one response, Meshuggah with one response, Old Dirty Bastard with one response, Rotting Out with one response, Slayer with three responses, Slip Knot with seven responses, and Xibalba with one response. The three performers with the most responses for being perceived as violent music were Slip Knot with seven responses, Slayer with three responses, and Any Metal with two responses. *Rap and Hip-Hop* had 87 total respondents, which included the performers 2Chainz with 3 responses, 50 Cents with one response, Any Rapper with six responses, ASAP Rocky with one response, Audio Push with one response, Big Booty Hoe with one response, Bobby Bitch with one response, Body Count with one response, Bones-n-Thugs with two responses, Busseria with one response, Bustra Rhyme with two responses, Cam'ron with one response, Chris Brown with 2 responses, Chief Keef with 3 responses, Drake with one response, Earl Sweatshirt with one response, Eminem with 13 responses, Excision with one response, Ferdo Santana with one response, Hopspin with one response, Hozier with one response, Ice

Cube with one response, Ice T and Body Count with one response, Insane Clown Posse with four responses, J Cole with one response, Jason Deuilo with one response, Kanye West with one response, Kendrick Lamae with one response, Lil Kim with one response, Lil Reese with one response, Lil Wayne with 16 responses, Linkin Park with one response, Migos with one response, N.W.A. with six responses, Notorious B.I.G. with two responses, Onyx with one response, Que with one response, RED with one response, School-Boy Q with one response, Stitches with one response, The Game with one response, Three Six Mafia with one response, TYGA with one response, Tupac with five responses, Tyler the Creator with six responses, Viper with one response, Wiz Khalifa with three responses, and Yellow Claw with one response. The 3 performers with the most responses for being violent music and performer are Lil Wayne with 16 responses, Eminem with 13 responses, and Any Rapper and Tyler the Creator each with six responses. *Other* had 31 total respondents, which included 30 Seconds to Mars with one response, Alternative with one response, Blueberry Hill with one response, Bono with one response, cannot name with nine responses, Death Cole with one response, Gretchen Wilson with one response, Kevin Galls with one response, Maria and the Diamonds with one response, Miley Cyrus with one response, My Chimerical Romance with one response, Nicki Minaj with one response, None with nine responses, Three Days Grace with one response, and WFC with one response. The label *Other* included performers who are not going to be considered violent music. However, nine respondents perceive no music as being violent.

The respondents named the following songs as violent songs: “Blurred Line” performed by Robin Thicke with two responses, “Clip So Long” performed by Que with

one response, “Fuck The Police” performed by N.W.A. with two responses, “Fright Night” performed by Migoa with one response, “Gangasta Rap Made Me Do It” performed by Ice Cube with one response, “Home Wrecker” performed by Maria and the Diamonds with one response, “Ja-Rule” performed by Exodus with one response, “Love the Way You Lie” by Eminem featuring Rihanna with one response, “Momma Said Knock You Out’ performed by Five Finger Death Punch with one response, “Mouth For War” performed by Pantera with one response, “Phantom of the Opera” with one response, “Reign of Blood” performed by Slayer with one response, “Take Me to Church” performed by Hozier with one response, and “Watch You Crawl” performed by RED with one response.

According to the respondents, the reason a song or performer is perceived as violent was broken down into two categories, Lyrics and Music. *Lyrics* had 56 total respondents, and included aggression against women with four responses, drug use with one response, eating flesh with one response, explicit with one response, graphic with one response, killing babies with one response, killing cops with two responses, killing and shooting with nine responses, message and image with four responses, screaming and yelling with eight responses, sex with one response, and words with twenty-three responses. *Music* had 8 total respondents for being the reason a song or performer is considered violent, which included musical instruments, form, and down tuning with five responses, sound with two responses, and style with one response.

According to some of the respondents, violent songs or performers have an emotional effect on the listener. A category of *Emotional Effect* was created and had 13 total respondents, which included anger with two responses, crazy with two responses,

demographics with one response, interpretation with three responses, music that makes me violent is Justin Bieber or Kanye West with one response, race with two responses, and violent behavior that includes head banging and mosh pits with two responses.

Missing from these data was how the respondents interact with the violent music to create feeling and experiences. The responses from this survey appeared to be very textualist based because the responses appeared to be very structured according to the rules of performer and listener (DeNora 2000; Adorno 1951). The respondents agreed that the lyrics of a Rap song are violent, but no respondent stated what types of violent feelings and experiences are created because they listen to the music even though they also have a high preference for Rap music.

The Second Survey

The second survey was offered to an online Popular Culture and Music course with the same demographics as the first survey with an incentive of extra credit. This follow-up information was needed to discover the affect of violent music on the listener's feelings and behavior to ensure norming a proper definition of violent music.

Nineteen students needed extra credit. Nineteen undergraduate students from the Popular Culture and Music course responded to the extra-credit survey, and some of the respondents answered some of the questions with numerous responses. The responses were broken down into categories according to emotional feeling. The music genre that makes respondents *sweat* was Death Metal, Death Punk, Electric Dance Music (EDM), and Techno because it is used to exercise and dance to. One respondent stated that she hates metal, but it motivates her husband when he is trying to accomplish a task or exercise, so she allows the music. The category labeled *music that pisses you off* received

eight total responses, which included the genres Alternative, Country, Mainstream Alternative, Pop, Rap, Rock, and Metal. Alternative bands that pissed off the listeners were Saosin and Circa Survive because of the selfishness of the lyrics. The genre Country and Brady Paisley were named due to their stereotypical gendered lyrics. Bands like Creed, Justin Bieber, Limp Bizkit, Nickleback, and Linkin Park pissed respondents off because of their arrogant, bland, common, middle of the road, and over-rated approach to music.

The music genre that makes the respondents *fantasize about death* received 8 total responses, which included the genres Alternative, Classic Rock, Hardcore Death Metal, and None. Bob Dylan, Flaming Lips, and Linkin Park were named as the bands that made the respondents fantasize about death. The over-all responses stated that no music makes the respondents fantasize about death. One respondent stated that depressed people fantasize about dying, and another respondent stated that Death Metal creates fetishizes death. The category of music that makes you feel *negative toward God* received eight total responses, which included Christian Rock, Death Metal, and no music could produce negative feelings toward God. These four feeling categories will no longer be used because the remaining categories have the same reasons for feeling and behavior experience when listening to music that create violent feelings.

The majority of respondents stated that the feeling of wanting to punch things, is gruesome, is offensive, is disturbing, listening makes your skin crawl, is aggressive, or scares the listeners are produced by the music styles or genres of Alternative, Hardcore Metal, and Hardcore Punk. These genres produce these feelings because they are very loud, fast, and the vocals are screamed. Also, the nondestructive physical violence that

occurs in a mosh pit is sought-out and acceptable during live events and concerts, as long as the mosh pit dancer followers the rules of the mosh pit. The respondents mostly agreed that these genres produce violent feelings, adrenalin, and energy through the hectic drumming, disorientated guitar riffs, and screamed lyrics that produce aggression and energy in the listener.

The violent music categories that emerged were Artists, Instruments, Listeners, Loudness, Lyrics, and Sound. The 19 respondents gave many examples of singers or bands who perform the style or genre of music that makes the respondent want to punch things, is gruesome, is offensive, listening makes your skin crawl, is aggressive, or scares the listener (See Table 1). The singers or bands fell into three music genres: Alternative, Hardcore Metal, and Hardcore Punk. The *Artist* produces these feelings according to how the artist sings the lyrics, as well as the image the artist produces because most respondents stated that the artist appears to be angry or mad when performing the song. These respondents stated that these genres usually have artists who dress in black, have long-hair, and are covered in tattoos. The *Instruments* used to produce the sound of these genres are also the reason that the instruments produce the named feelings. The instruments in these genres are down-tuned, played fast and loud, the guitars are chaotic and distorted, and the beat may change from a 4 to 4 rhythm to a 6 to 8 rhythm. The respondents also stated that the instruments in these genres create no consent beat, but use feed back of the instruments to create these feelings. The respondents stated that as listeners to these named genres, they experienced perceptions of nonconformity, power, aggression, losing faith in God and society that creates despair and resentment, the perception of not having dreams or a future, and the violence in the mosh pit. The *Lyrics*

of these genres were conforming, dark, depressing, hatful, in your face, animalistic, creepy, distorted, hard to understand, self-cutting, suicide, and screamed at the listener. The *voice* of the artist produces high-pitch notes and lyrics sang with intensity, voice sounds that are angry, are grungy, make grunting sounds, are rasp, and screaming.

The questionnaire asked the respondents to name a song that produces the feelings of wanting to punch things, is gruesome, is offensive, is disturbing, makes your skin crawl, is aggressive, or scares the listeners. A list was compiled (See table 1). It was determined that the genres that created these feeling were Metal and Punk. Two respondents listed Rap music as the music genre that creates the named feelings, but the reasons for the song being violent are not reasons that are equated with Rap music. The reasons these songs produce these feeling are how the artist sings the lyrics, the artist's body language and movement, and the live show experience. The named songs that the respondents listed are also songs that are used to create the violent atmosphere of the live mosh pit. The songs are fast, loud and distorted, and contain the message of resentment, anger, sorrow, and abandonment. In some respects, these songs are intentionally recorded to produce the named feelings. The respondents stated that these songs work on their sensory perception because the sound and screamed lyrics are always in your face with few rest moments for the listener to recover from the in your face experience. Most respondents who listened to these songs stated that they experience the named feeling when listening to the song, but listened to the song anyway.

Table 1. List of Violent Bands, Songs, and Genres

Band or Singer	Genre	Song
Alt-J	English Indie	“Every Other Freckle”
Akado	Modern Metal/Dark-Pop	
Aus Rotten	Crust Punk	
Berzum	Black Metal	
Betraying the Martyrs	Screamo	“Man Made Disaster”
Blink-182	Alternative American Rock	“Personal Tragedy ”
Blue October	Alternative American Rock	“Razor Blade”
Bob Dylan	Classic Rock	“In My Time Of Dying”
Bring Me The Horizon	Alternative Metal Core	“As I Lay Dying”
Cave State	Power Violence	
Circa Survival	Post Hard-Core	“Mandela”
Circa Survival	Post Hard-Core	“Stop the Fucking Car”
Corrosion of Conformity	Thrash	
Death	Death Metal	
Discharge	Crust Punk	
Dr. Dre	Rap	“Bitch Ain’t Shit”
Drowning Pool	Metal	“Bodies Hit The Floor”
Dubstep	Electric Dance Music	
Forget My Silence	Death-Metal	“This Is Only The Beginning”
Forget My Silence	Death-Metal	“Supersonic”
Gothminister	Industrial Metal	
Gorgoroth	Black Metal	
Guns-n-Roses	Heavy-Metal	
Hate Breed	Metal Core	
Horror Film Sound Tracts		“Nightmare on Elm Street”
Insect Warfare	Power Violence	
Johnny Cash	His Own	
Justin Bieber	Pop	

Table 1 Continued		
Kanye West	Rap	“Monster”
Ladacris	Rap	“Get Back”
Linkin Park	Alternative American Rock	“Closer To The Edge”
Linkin Park	Alternative American Rock	“No More Sorrow”
Linkin Park	Alternative American Rock	“What I’ve Done”
Megrudergrind	Power Violence	“Burden”
Metallica	Metal	“Master of Puppets”
Miley Cyrus	Pop	
Minor Threat	Hard-Core Punk	
Misfits	Punk	
Municipal Waste	Thrash	
Napalm Death	Grind Core	
Nazi/SkinHead	Punk	
One Direction	Pop	
Papa Roach	Alternative American Rock	“Last Resort”
Rebecca Black	Pop	
Saosin	Post Hard-Core	“Seven Years”
Screwdriver	Neo-Nazi Punk	
Spazz	Power Violence	
Suicide Silence	Death-Core	“You Only Live Once”
The American Idol Movement	Hard to Say	
The Melvins	Alternative American Rock	
The Offspring	Alternative American Rock	“Kid You’re Gonna Go Far”
The Used	Alternative American Rock	
Three Days Grace	Alternative American Rock	“IHate Everything About You”
Waka Flocka Flame	Rap	“Hard In Da Paint”
Weezer	Alternative American Rock	“Say It Ain’t So”
2 Live Crew	Rap	

5. ANALYSIS

The inventory of violent songs is drawn from the perceptions and experiences of normal college students to the degree to which the findings spot-light violent behavior. No control was used for violent tendencies and behaviors in normal college students. Normal college students share a general perception and experience, and mindfulness meditation as an intervening variable should have a measurable effect when listening to violent music showing mindfulness effect. Mindfulness meditation should affect normal college students, as well as criminals when experiencing the feelings produced by a violent song. I used the Symbolic Interactionist paradigm to create a general meaning of a violent song, and to inductively arrive at a grounded musical meaning because of reflection and competence of the music.

The First Survey

The first survey included 238 respondents, and their responses were used for the norming process of this research project that seeks to answer four research questions. The first research question was, "what is a violent song? "To determine this, I focused on realistic nomenclature from the first survey to help define a violent song. The respondents were asked to give examples of songs or performers that they thought were violent and then explain why those songs or artists are considered violent. I then broke the responses down into five categories that individually define violent music according to genre, performer, song, reason, and effect. The three genres that occurred most frequently were Heavy Metal, Rap/Hip Hop, and Screamo. Screamo is a sub-genre of Hardcore Punk Rock. Some song titles and performers mentioned were "Gangsta Rap Made Me Do It"/Ice-Cube/Rap, "Momma Said Knock You Out"/Five Finger Death Punch/Metal,

"Mouth For War"/Pantera/Metal, and "Phantom of the Opera/Opera Soundtrack. Respondents explained the concept violent song in terms of the descriptive message, the extremely loud volume, and the screaming of the lyrics. The sound of the music was considered violent because the musical instruments are aggressive, down-tuned, loud, and fast. The effects of violent music on the listener were anger and violent behavior. In live music, these emotions take the form of head banging and dancing in a mosh pit. The mosh pit is extremely violent because of the power thrusting of bodies slamming into each other with the beat of the music. When listeners are dancing in the mosh pit, swinging arms hit people and head banging causes head butting that cracks open skulls, and the physical violence in the mosh pit dancing is used as violent emotional release. After a dance session in a 400-person mosh pit, it is unlikely that the dancer would have any energy left to immediately commit a violent act against society because she or he danced to a violent song.

The second research question asked how college students perceive "violence" in popular music. I asked the respondents "what makes some popular music violent?" The responses formed four categories: Lyrics, Instruments, Behavior, and People, The first category of what makes some music violent is *Lyrics* because the lyrics are offensive, gruesome, screamed, and not understood. The second category is the *Instruments* that are used to create the loud, dark, and dissonant beat. The third category is B*ehavior* described in the lyrics that usually include violent acts against women and self. Also, behavior includes the mosh pit dancing experience. The fourth category is *People,* and how individuals perceive a song as being violent according to how the artist displays anger or grief when singing the lyrics, as well as the feeling created by the

performer/listener relationship. Some respondents stated that both lyrics and music are needed for violent popular music. However, ten respondents wrote that no music is violent.

The third research question asked "what are the differences among college students in perceiving a 'violent song'? To determine the difference in the respondents, they were asked to rate their preference level for 14 different music genres. The top three preferred genres were Rap/Hip Hop, Rock and Pop. Out of all 14 different music genres, Heavy Metal only received a preference level of 2, the lowest rating of all categories. One reason for the low rating could be that the sample set had a 75 percent religious affiliation. The literature showed that religious affiliation can produce the belief that Heavy Metal is evil music. Another likely reason for the low preference level for Heavy Metal was the high preference level for Country music, and the survey being administered in Texas. The sample was two-thirds female with an average age of 19, which could also account for Heavy Metal's low preference rating. The real difference among the respondents was how they defined violent music: the lyrics or the sound. Respondents considered Rap/Hip Hop violent because of the lyrics, but they also had a high preference level for the genre. The responses appear to be very textualist (DeNora 2000) because the respondents seemed to be answering the questions from a performer/ listener perspective. If the respondent listens to Rap or Rock music, they could have defined Heavy Metal as violent; to make it appear they do not listen to violent music.

The fourth research question asked "what are the components of a *violent song* (e.g. lyrics, rhythm, or musical flow)?" Of the sample, 40.3 percent responded lyrics, 41.6 percent responded music, and 16.0 percent responded other or both lyrics and music.

This almost equal division between lyrics or sound making a song violent reflects the literature because there is almost an equal division in the literature between lyrics or sound making a song violent.

Missing from these data is how the respondents process violent music to create violent feelings and experiences. The responses from this survey appear to be very textualist based because the responses appear to be very structured according to the rules of performer, listener, and inherent meaning (DeNora 2000). The respondents agreed that the lyrics of a Rap song were violent, but no respondent really stated what types of violent feeling and experiences are created when listening.

The Second Survey

The first survey produced a list of many different violent songs and definitions of violent songs. Yet, I found that very few respondents claimed that violent feelings are produced when listening to a violent song. In order to explore the actual feelings that are associated with violent music to arrive at a sociological definition of violent music, a follow-up survey was needed to directly ask 19 respondents how the music they perceive to be violent effects their feelings as listeners, and what are the affects of the violent song on the listener. The second survey took on a contextualist (DeNora 2000) perceptive for collected data classification. The list of violent feelings from the methods section, and the music that produces those feeling, were used for the second survey.

Based on responses, genres that "make you sweat" included Death Metal, Death Punk, Electric Dance Music, and Techno. Respondents state that these music genres are used for exercise, motivation to work, and dancing that leads to the sweating. Music that "pisses you off" received responses that included all types of music genres that are

considered mainstream such as the music genre Country and artist Brady Paisley. The Country genre pissed off the listeners because the lyrics of the songs are stereotypically gendered. Mainstream artists like Creed, Justin Bieber, and Linkin Park pissed off the respondents because the artists are arrogant, bland, common, middle of the road, overrate, and use selfish lyrical approaches to music. Music used to "fantasize about death" included Alternative, Classic Rock, Hardcore Death Metal, and the bands include Bob Dylan, Flamming Lips, and Linkin Park. Respondents had a negative response toward fantasizing about death because most were religious. The respondents stated that no music, including Death Metal, could make them go against their faith and religious belief.

Music that created feelings and experiences of "making you want to punch things," is "gruesome," is "offensive," is "disturbing," is "aggressive," "makes your skin crawl," and "scares the listener" were put into one category because the responses were similar for each concept when measured as an individual category. Genres or styles that produced violent feelings were Extreme Alternative, Hardcore Metal, and Hardcore Punk. The named violent feeling were produced because the genres are very loud, very fast and down tuned instruments, hectic double-base drumming, physical violence of a mosh pit, adrenaline rush and energy high through disorientated guitar riffs, and screaming vocals that produce aggression. The singer or band who performed the style of music that created the previously named feelings were genres of Extreme Alternative, Hardcore Metal, and Hardcore Punk. The artist or singer created the feelings by how they sing the lyrics, the image they portrayed while singing the lyrics, and how they appeared to be mad or angry when performing the song. The musical instruments produced the feelings by being playing loud, fast, chaotic, distorted; changing the beat from 4/4 to 6/8

rhythm; down tuned guitars, using a double-bass drum-kit; having no consent beat; and using feedback. These genres produced violent feeling in the listener because of the perceptions of nonconformity, power, aggression, lost faith in God and society, despair and resentment, the perception of not having dreams or a future, and the live dancing experience of the mosh pit. The lyrics used produced the feelings because the lyrics expressed non-conforming, dark, depressing, in your face, hateful, animalistic, creepy, self-cutting, and suicidal thoughts. The music was in your face, distorted, hard to understand, and screamed. The named violent feelings were also produced by the voice of singers in these genres because of the high-pitched vocals, voice intensity, and vocal sounds that are angry, grumpy, growling, grunting, and raspy.

When the respondents were specifically asked what genres and songs produced violent feelings, they chose Metal and Punk, which includes Screamo. The reasons a genre or song produced violent feelings were how artist sings the song, the sound of the song, the body language of the artist, and the violent atmosphere of the live mosh pit experience. These songs were hard, fast, distorted, and full of energy. The messages of the songs contain anger, abandonment, resentment, and sorrow. The live mosh pit experience numbs the listeners' sensatory perception because the loud sound and screamed lyrics are always in the listener's face, with very little rest times during the beats of the song.

The Focus Group

The purpose of the focus group was to gain a better understand of the sub-genres and bands that have evolved from my study as classifications of violent popular music. The focus group members provided expert opinions on what is violent about a band,

genre, or song, which allows for an explanation of the feelings and behaviors that are produced from listening to a violent popular band, genre, or song.

The focus group included 8 members from musical tastes of Powerviolence rockers to teenie-boppers. The Powerviolence rockers were dressed in black tee shirts that promoted a Powerviolence band while the teenie-boppers were dressed similarly to their favorite artist, Katy Perry. Some of the group members wore baseball caps that made me think they consumed the music of the Americana genre. The symbolic musical clothing styles of the focus group members assured a difference in opinions and explanations of violent popular music. There was a difference in how the group members perceived violent music because of the different music genres that the individuals' consumed. Some group members had a perception that music creates violence, and other group members perceived music as a release for violent feelings. The focus group had a consensus that violent music is also live music that use and need lyrics that are mostly screamed by the performer, power thrusting of bodies to a fast beat, or dancing in a 400-person mosh pit. This is not soft-cock mainstream Punk Rock like the Foo Fighters or Muse; this is the raw sound of real instruments. The mosh pit experience is needed to release violent feelings and aggression, and is sought out for accidental physical harm. However, mosh pit dancers usually follow the rules of the mosh pit and the top three rules are: no premeditated violence against anyone; when a dancer is on the ground, other dancers cannot stomp them; and if a dancer acts out of line with premeditated physical harm, the whole pit could turn against the instigator. According to the respondents, one stated reason why violent music is live music is that the music is too hard, fast, loud, and aggressive to be played in an apartment setting without headphones. The opinions of the

focus group on different violent music genres were in line with the definition of a violent song created by the other two surveys.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A Violent Song Definition

A list of five-songs was compiled using the data from the first two surveys and focus group. The genres that are most violent are Hardcore Death Metal, Hardcore Punk Rock, Post Hardcore Punk Rock, Powerviolence, and Screamo. According to the two surveys, as well as the focus group, a violent song is defined by the adrenaline, energy, and fear the sound and lyrics create in the listener, which are enhanced during the live mosh pit dancing experience. The live experience of the violent music is defined as subjective (Žižek 2008). This adrenaline, energy, and fear are also required for a listener to have a HRV response after listening to one of the normed violent songs.

When respondents were asked what bands, genres, or songs create violent feelings and experiences, interestingly, they did not name Rap music. However, sub-genres of Hardcore Metal and Hardcore Punk were named because they get the blood pumping in the veins. Especially, during a live performance where mosh pit dancing is allowed and encouraged. The reason the respondents gave for naming the Hardcore Metal and Hardcore Punk genres as violent was how the sound and lyrics created different violent affects on the listener based on how a song is performed, heard, and mosh pit/danced too. Additionally, musical instruments and not computers are needed to create the sound for a violent song. Most Rap/Hip Hop music does not meet this definition of violent music. Lyrical meaning is not as important as lyrical screaming, screeching, and growling. Based on these criteria, I have compiled a list of songs that will be used in a future HRV violent music pilot study where mindfulness meditation is an intervening variable.

The Normed List of Five Violent Songs

a. The first genre is *Screamo*, which is a subgenre of Hardcore Punk. The band is *Betraying the Martyrs,* and the song is "Man Made Disaster."

b. The second genre is *Death Metal*, which is a sub-genre of Heavy Metal. The band is *Forget my Silence*, and the song is "This Is Only The Beginning."

c. The third genre is *Powerviolence*, which is a sub-genre of Hardcore Punk. The band is *Megrudergrind*, and the song is "Burden."

d. The fourth genre is *Post Hardcore*, which is a genre that combines Punk Rock and Heavy Metal. The band is *Saosin,* and the song is "Seven Years."

e. The fifth genre is *Deathcore*, which is a sub-genre of Malcore, but not Death Metal. The band is *Suicide Silence*, and the song is "You Only Live Once."

Violent Music

An interesting interpretation of these data is found in Slavoj Žižek (2008) works on cultural and institutional violence. The first form of violence discovered in this study is subjective violence, which is acts of crime, civil unrest, war, and produces bodily harm (Žižek 2008). The other form of violence found in this study is symbolic violence (objective), which is embodied in language, uses forms of discrimination, hate-speech, racism, and music when words fail because of its universal meaning (Žižek 2008).

My research produced violent song meaning and experiences of subjective violence. The respondents stated that for a band or genre to be considered violent, the live mosh pit experience was needed to create violent feelings or violent feeling release after physical body contact. The body contact is in line with dancing and nondestructive physical violence. However, bodily injuries do occur because of the violent dancing and

slamming of the bodies while dancing in the mosh pit. My research is lacking information on what a *live mosh pit experience* entails. My study was not concerned with how violent music was consumed, only with what is defined as a violent song. My study did not reveal that violent music has to be heard in a public setting, only how the public setting enhances the violent music experience. Usually, mosh pit dancers are listening to the band that they will dance to on the car's compact disc player on their way to the live performance. Listening to the music before the show gets their blood and adrenaline pumping so they can be ready to enter the mosh pit.

Lyrics were a main concept for a song being violent, but song lyrics are violent because of the perceived nature of the message in the song, as well as the listener's perception and socialization. Some lyrics have a message that are screamed, growled, or grunted at the listener. This screaming is distorted and loud, so adrenaline, energy, and fear can be produced in the listener. However, all lyrics have the means for being perceived as symbolic violence (Žižek 2008), because the violence is perceived or concealed in the lyrics of the song and have to be heard. All of the respondents agreed that the violent message was written into the song's lyrics, except all listeners will not perceive the violent lyrics with the same perspective for violence. Both types of violence were needed for the norming of a violent song because these normed songs will be expected to produce significant HRV responses after mindfulness meditation.

A missing feature of this research project is a firm definition of the live music experience. In the post-modern twenty-first century, a live experience can be consumed from a personal dwelling. My research also understands that the responses could be entirely different if the surveys are administered in the music department instead of the

department of sociology. The main goal of my study was to end the scholarly conflict of what is a violent song by directly asking those who consume modern popular music what is a violent song. Also, if the surveys were administered in a different geographical area, they may be a lower religious affiliation and a higher preference level for Heavy Metal. Only one respondent considered Country music violent, so that could be one direction my study could be taken. Finally, when the respondents saw the words violent music, it may have primed the respondent's brain to perceive physical subjective violence and no other type. This trigger could be one reason to explain the live mosh pit experience being related to violent music. This researcher is confident that these normed songs will produce the needed responses for a HRV pilot study because those who may be research subjects in the HRV study contributed to the norming exercise that created the violent song list.

Conclusion

My study helps to enhance the Sociology of Music literature by contributing to the research on music and deviant behavior. By studying the sub-culture of violent music, this research showcases the Symbolic Interactionist approach to violent music by exploring the experiences of violence in music. My methodology has a sociological approach because it uses student's perspectives, formal questionnaires, and conversations of violent music to norm a violent song. The sociological value of this research is to determine the feasibility of success of interdisciplinary research on interpretation.

These normed five songs will be used in a cardiovascular psychophysiological mindfulness meditation study to determine if violent music affects individual behavior. The study will compare a mindfulness meditation group with a group experiencing

relaxation control. The mindfulness meditation will consist of a twenty minute guided meditation session and the control group will be instructed to quietly relax. The respondents will be hooked up to heart rate variability collection equipment and asked to listen to one of the five normed violent songs while the HRV equipment collects data. The experiment will measure whether mindfulness meditation affects HRV while listening to a violent song. We expect that the violent music group will show a significant increase in HRV during the violent song and that the control group will show significantly higher HRV compared to the control. The rationale behind this study is that violent music will activate the sympathetic nervous system and that those in the mindfulness meditation group will show a decreased response to the song. The primary contribution of my thesis is to demonstrate the effectiveness and practicality of integrating a sociological perspective in a multi-disciplinary social/ behavior representative study.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN MARCOS
The rising STAR of Texas

Institutional Review Board Application

Certificate of Approval

Applicant: Bernard Glowinski

Application Number : 2014X2938

Project Title: The Sociological Norming of the Members' Concepts of "Violent Music."

Date of Approval: 12/02/14 10:28:52

Expiration Date: None(Application Approved - Exempt)

Assistant Vice President for Research and Federal Relations

Chair, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B: SURVEYS

First Survey

1. Survey ID
Instructions: The following questions ask about your demographic information. Please provide a response to each question that is applicable to you.
2. What is your gender? Male or Female.
3. What is your age?
4. Level of education? High School, Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Graduate School.
5. What is your major?
6. What is your GPA?
7. Do you have a religious affiliation? Yes or No.
8. If you answered "Yes" to the question above, what is your religious affiliation?
9. Ethnicity (select all that apply): American Indian/Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Asian, African American, White, or Other (please specify).
10. Are you Hispanic? No or Yes.
11. Are you a military veteran? No or Yes.
12. If you answered "Yes" to the question above, were you deployed to a combat zone? No or Yes.
13. Do you have any formal musical training? No or Yes.
14. If you answered "Yes" to the question above, please list the instrument(s) you play and the length of training.
15. Are there any other instruments that you taught yourself to play (i.e., self taught, no formal training)? If so, please list them below, as well as the length of time that you've played each instrument.
16. For the following items, please indicate your basic preference level for the genres listed using the scale provided. 1 = strongly dislike, 4 = neither like nor dislike, 7 = strongly like. Classical, Blues, Country, Dance/Electronica, Folk, Rap/Hip-Hop, Soul/Funk, Religious, Alternative, Jazz, Pop, Heavy Metal, and Sound Tracts/Theme Songs.
17. In general, what are your three favorite styles of music?
18. In general, what is more important to you when you listen to a song, the music, the lyrics or other (please specify)?
19. In your opinion, what makes some music violent?
20. In your opinion, what styles of music are violent and why?
21. Can you give some examples of songs or performers that you think are violent and why?

Second Survey

I am working with several faculty members and graduate students on a music study. We are interested in finding out how popular music affects listeners' feelings and behaviors. Please answer the following questions if relevant to you:

Please think about the style or genre of music that leaves you with any of the following feelings when you hear it:

- The music makes you want to punch things.
- The music makes you sweat.
- The music pisses you off.
- The music is gruesome.
- The music makes you fantasize about death.
- The music offends you.
- The music is disturbing to you.
- The music makes your skin crawl.
- The music makes you feel aggressive.
- The music makes you feel negative towards God.
- The music scares you.

What is the style or genre of music? What is it about this music that creates these feelings in you?

Give an example of a singer or band who performs this style or genre of music? What is it about this singer or band that creates these feelings in you?

Give an example of a particular song performed by this singer or band? How does this song create these feelings in you?

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