Music Preferences, Personality Style, and Developmental Issues of Adolescents

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The purpose of this study was to examine the personality characteristics and developmental issues of 3 groups of adolescent music listeners: those preferring light qualities of music, those preferring heavy qualities of music, and those who had eclectic preferences for music qualities. One hundred sixty-four adolescents completed an age-appropriate personality inventory and a systematic measure of music listening preference. The findings indicate that each of the 3 music preference groups is inclined to demonstrate a unique profile of personality dimensions and developmental issues. Those preferring heavy or light music qualities indicated at least moderate difficulty in negotiating several distinct domains of personality and/or developmental issues; those with more eclectic music preferences did not indicate similar difficulty. Thus, there was considerable support for the general hypothesis that adolescents prefer listening to music that reflects specific personalities and the developmental issues with which they are dealing.

INTRODUCTION

Music is important in the social and personal lives of adolescents. They cruise the streets in vehicles with pounding subwoofers; 25,000-seat concert stadiums sell out in minutes; and billions of dollars are spent each year on tapes and compact discs (Geter and Streisand, 1995). Between Grades 7 and 12, the typical adolescent spends over 10,000 h listening to music, an amount of time similar to that spent in class by the time they graduate from high school (Davis, 1985; Mark, 1988). Many researchers have examined why music is so important to adolescents and how adolescents actively use music to satisfy particular social, emotional, and developmental needs (Arnett *et al.*, 1995; Larson *et al.*, 1989; Larson and Kubey, 1983; Levy and Windahl, 1985; Lull, 1987; Rubin, 1994). Researchers have been particularly interested in adolescents and young adults who are marginalized and/or experiencing major psychological issues and have found that they prefer heavier forms of music such as heavy metal and hard rock (Hansen and Hansen, 1990; Took and Weiss, 1994; Wass *et al.*, 1989). It is presumed that these music preferences reflect the values, conflicts, and developmental issues with which these youth are dealing.

Two groups of adolescents ignored by researchers are those who have strong preferences for lighter kinds of music (e.g., pop, teen pop, dance) and those who have more eclectic tastes or have no strong preferences for either heavy or light music. Thus, it is unknown how personality and developmental issues may contribute to the particular music preferences of these 2 groups of listeners. The major purpose of this study was to examine and contrast the personality characteristics and developmental issues of 3 groups of adolescent listeners, i.e., those preferring heavy, light, and eclectic music qualities. Also of interest was to readdress and extend early research relating personality and developmental issues to music preferences

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(e.g., Cattell and Saunders, 1954; Hahn, 1954; Keston and Pinto, 1955). This is important because past research with adolescents has not typically used systematic, reliable, and/or clinically valid measures of adolescent personality and developmental issues.

According to the *uses and gratifications* approach (Arnett, 1995; Arnett *et al.*, 1995; Gantz *et al.*, 1978; Larson, 1995; Rubin, 1994), people make different media choices depending on personal characteristics. Thus, music listeners gravitate to particular kinds of music because they have particular personality characteristics, issues, and/or needs that are either reflected in the music they choose or that the music satisfies. For example, adolescents' music preferences have been found to be related to issues of identity, dependence–independence, and separateness–connection (Avery, 1979; Mainprize, 1985); values, images, beliefs, and identifications (Arnett, 1995; Larson, 1995); and perceptions of self (White, 1985). Steele and Browne's "media practice model" for adolescents incorporates identity, music selection, and social interaction to describe the nature of their involvement with media that, in turn, shapes their sense of themselves (Steele and Browne, 1995). Lull (1987) concluded, "Young people use music to resist authority at all levels, assert their personalities, develop peer relationships and romantic entanglements, and learn about things that their parents and the schools aren't telling them" (p. 152).

Although this body of research and theory indicates a relationship between music preferences and a variety of social, emotional, and developmental needs of adolescents, little is known about specific music preferences and how they may satisfy different needs for different kinds of music listeners. This is especially true for those preferring light music and those with more eclectic tastes in music.

Preferences for Heavy Music

Heavy music typically includes such styles as hard rock, classic rock, heavy metal, and rap (Larson, 1995). It is usually guitar and/or drum-based, is loud and fast, and expresses a variety of intense emotions (e.g., anger, sexual aggression). Although many different messages are communicated in heavy music (e.g., sexual, environmental, sociopolitical), its themes are often driven by moral relativity, antiestablishment values, and hypermasculinity. Several studies have found relationships between adolescents experiencing psychological issues and preferences for such music. For example, adolescents preferring heavy music have more sympathetic views of suicide, homicide, and Satanism (Wass *et al.*, 1989), experience more psychological turmoil (Took and Weiss, 1994), and exhibit more anger and emotional problems (Epstein *et al.*,

1990) than those without such a preference. Research with young adults indicates that a preference for heavy music is associated with being hypersexual, showing less respect for women, exhibiting greater criminal and antisocial interpersonal behavior (Hansen and Hansen, 1990), and being more risk-taking or sensation-seeking (Litle and Zuckerman, 1986).

Researchers have suggested that these relationships occur because of the match between characteristics of listeners and the themes in heavy music (e.g., rejection of authority, hyperindividualism, acceptance of antisocial behavior; Arnett, 1991; Hansen and Hansen, 1990; Klein *et al.*, 1993). It is also likely that heavy music matches the qualities and intensity of their feelings (e.g., tough, wild, angry) associated with the themes through its pounding rhythms, fast pace, and discordant sounds. They may use heavy music to regulate their emotions in at least 3 ways. First, heavy music may serve to distract listeners with external stimulation (Litle and Zuckerman, 1986; McIlwraith and Josephson, 1985), thus escaping or avoiding uncomfortable and unwanted moods and feelings (Roe, 1985; Rosenbaum and Prinsky, 1987; Thompson, 1990). Second, by seeking validation for what they think and feel about themselves, others, and society, it assures them that they are not emotionally alone. Third, Arnett (1991, 1996) suggests that heavy music can serve a cathartic or calming effect, an effect that relieves unhappiness, anger, or anxiety.

The present study used the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory (MAPI; Millon *et al.*, 1982) to investigate the relationships between listener characteristics and music preferences. This measure of clinically important adolescent personality dimensions, issues, and behaviors was used for 2 reasons. First, it assesses many of the dimensions suggested by past research (e.g., lack of respect, anticonformity, indifferent feelings regarding others), thus permitting replication of past research using a valid measure. Second, it extends past research by including scales measuring other important personality dimensions and developmental issues that adolescents often experience, e.g., hypersensitivity, feelings of rejection by peers, lack of identity integration, and poor rapport with family. It was expected that adolescents with these and other characteristics (e.g., tough-mindedness, uncooperativeness, worries about scholastic abilities) would prefer heavy music, since such music has qualities that match their personal issues and feelings.

Preferences for Light Music

Light music typically includes such styles as pop, teen pop, and dance (e.g., Schwartz, 1992; Thompson and

Larson, 1995). It ranges from slow, emotional ballads with important developmental themes to rhythmic melodies designed for dancing. For example, the lyrics in light music explore developmental themes (Larson, 1995; Thompson, 1990) such as relationships (e.g., romantic, family, sexual), autonomy and identity (e.g., who am I and where am I going?), and sociability (e.g., fitting in and being accepted by peers). The associated emotions and feelings touch upon the experiences of its listeners, soothe their emotional concerns, and provide validation for feelings (Larson and Kubey, 1983; Roe, 1985; Rosenbaum and Prinsky, 1987).

Past research indicates that music listening by adolescents and young adults is often related to developmental issues (e.g., Schwartz and Fouts, 1998). For example, teenagers having few friends prefer music with themes of loneliness and independence (Burke and Grinder, 1966). Students with greater trust in others and greater independence from peer influence prefer music that elicits positive emotional states (e.g., love, hope) more than those who are less trusting and needing to be accepted by others (Gordon *et al.*, 1992). Other researchers report that adolescents listen to music with themes of autonomy, identity, love, and sexuality (Avery, 1979; Larson and Kubey, 1983; Mainprize, 1985). What is not known, however, is whether having a preference for light music is related to the overall psychological make-up of its listeners, i.e., their personalities, developmental issues, and behaviors. That is, can one characterize adolescents who prefer listening to light music?

It was expected that adolescents preferring light music would have personalities and developmental issues different than those preferring heavy music or having more eclectic music preferences. It was expected that those preferring light music would have personality attributes and issues that emphasize relationships, autonomy and identity, and sociability. Specifically, it was expected that they would be characterized as being cooperative, sociable, reflective (i.e., not impulsive), responsible, accepting of others and their families, and having confidence in their academic abilities. However, they may also have particular developmental issues associated with insecurities involving self-esteem, their developing bodies, sexual relationships, and their acceptance by peers. This profile would be due to light music containing these themes and associated emotions, thus reflecting and validating who they are and how they feel during this stage of development.

Eclectic Music Preference

A final group of adolescents is those who do not have strong preferences for either style of music, but rather, exhibit flexibility in listening to music according to mood, context, and particular needs at the time. For example, they may at times use music to reflect and validate their moods, but at other times, to change their moods. They may like listening to particular kinds of music with peers but other kinds when they are alone. When dealing with developmental issues, they may at times listen to the pulsating beat of rap or the discordant sounds of heavy metal, e.g., when dealing with feelings of rejection or how unfair life is. At other times, they may choose to listen to sentimental ballads, e.g., when dealing with issues of connection and longing. Thus, as one adolescent recently said to the second author regarding her music preferences, "It's all good!"

For many adolescents, particular developmental issues ebb and flow according to circumstances and are not particularly distressing or preoccupying. In fact, most adolescents negotiate their adolescence successfully without undue hardship (Gullotta *et al.*, 1999; Santrock, 2000). These adolescents may be better adjusted and adapt reasonably well to life's daily hassles with family and peers and their developmental issues (e.g., identity, autonomy). It was expected that adolescents with more eclectic and balanced musical tastes would have scores on the MAPI that indicate successful negotiation of adolescence, i.e., their personality dimensions and developmental issues would fall somewhere between adolescents preferring light music and those preferring heavy music. It was also expected that adolescents having preferences for either heavy *or* light music qualities may be experiencing more problems than those with eclectic tastes in music.

Gender and Age Differences in Music Preferences

Research has consistently revealed gender and age differences in music tastes and involvement with music (Christenson and Lindlof, 1983; Christenson and Roberts, 1989; Klein *et al.*, 1993; Larson *et al.*, 1989; Roe, 1985). In order to control for such effects in determining the relationships between personality characteristics/developmental issues and music preferences, gender and age differences were examined. Consistent with past research, it was expected that female adolescents would listen to (e.g., Thompson, 1990) and prefer light music qualities more than would males since such music reflects their socialization themes (e.g., emotional expressiveness, relationships; Christenson and Peterson, 1988). Males were expected to prefer heavy music qualities more than did females since it reflects their socialization (e.g., themes of independence and dominance; Herberger, 1987). It was also expected that older adolescents would prefer light qualities in music compared to younger adolescents (e.g., Roberts

and Henrickson, 1990), since the former are dealing with more relationship and intimacy issues and have resolved many of the issues surrounding identity and rebellion. And conversely, younger adolescents were expected to prefer heavy qualities more than did older adolescents (Roberts and Henricksen, 1990), since the former are likely struggling with issues of separation and rebellion and experiencing negative emotions which are common lyrical and musical themes in such music.

METHOD

Participants

An advertisement of research and parental consent forms was distributed to 249 students (144 junior high, 105 senior high) in 2 public schools in Calgary, Alberta, Canada; the voluntary nature of the study was emphasized. One hundred eight-two (73% return rate) consent forms were signed by a parent or guardian and returned. The schools were in middle-class neighborhoods; ethnicity was not systematically assessed, although the vast majority of participants were Caucasian.

Consent forms were signed and returned to the schools by 182 students. Seven participants were not at school on the day of the data collection, leaving a total of 175 students who completed all or part of the questionnaire. Eleven eligible participants were eliminated from the study (7 who completed less than 90% of questionnaire items and 4 who indicated that they did not prefer music described by any of the qualities) leaving 164 participants for the data analysis (72 males, 92 females; 80 junior high, 84 senior high). The mean age was 16 years (age range, 12–19); the ages of females and males did not differ significantly.

Procedure and Questionnaire

Questionnaires were completed by participants (with signed parental consent) during regularly scheduled class times (in groups of 15–24). Completion time was 30–40 min. The questionnaire first assessed adolescents' music preferences, followed by the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory.

Music Preference

Finnas (1987) developed a procedure for assessing music preference based on qualities of music that listeners prefer, rather than particular styles and/or representative performers that often change over short periods of time (e.g., Decima Research, 1991). Thirteen qualities of music (Finnas, 1987) were presented to be rated by each participant: "romantic and dreamy," "mild and quiet," "sad and gloomy," "peaceful and relaxing," "soft and tender," "serious and thoughtful," "good-natured and kind," "upsetting and protesting," "tough and hard," "loud, played at a great volume," "wild and violent," "played with many guitars," and "played at a fast tempo." Participants were asked to indicate how much they enjoyed music described by each quality on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all" to 5 = "A great deal"). Finnas (1987) previously factor analyzed these qualities and found 2 distinct categories of music qualities: "quiet, contemplative, traditional, and serious music" (the first 7 qualities listed above), and "tough, wild, loud, protesting, and rock-oriented music" (the final 6 qualities listed above). In the present study, these 2 music categories were labeled light and heavy, respectively. Schwartz (1992) has found that preferences for light qualities of music (assessed using the Finnas, 1987, scale) significantly correlate with actual listening preferences for performers and mainstream styles of music (e.g., teen pop, hip hop, dance), with preferences for heavy qualities of music significantly correlating with preferences for harder styles of music (e.g., heavy metal, rock, classic rock).

Music involvement was assessed by asking participants to estimate (in minutes) the amount of time they listened to music on each weekday and weekend day. A weekly total was computed by summing these amounts.

Personality and Developmental Issues

The Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory (MAPI; Millon *et al.*, 1982) was developed to quantify several personality characteristics and developmental issues salient during adolescence. This widely used, highly reliable and valid clinical scale (e.g., Hart, 1995; Holcomb and Kashani, 1991; Pryor and Wiederman, 1998) consists of 150 true–false statements from which 20 scales can be derived. These scales are divided into 2 groups that reflect adolescent personality (personality styles) and developmental issues (expressed concerns and behavioral correlates). Eight scales assess different personality styles: Introversive, Inhibited, Cooperative, Sociable, Confident, Forceful, Respectful, and Sensitive; 8 scales assess expressed concerns: Self-Concept, Personal Esteem, Body Comfort, Sexual Acceptance, Peer Security, Social Tolerance, Family Rapport, Academic Confidence; and 4 scales assess behavioral correlates: Impulse Control, Societal Conformity, Scholastic Achievement, and Attendance Consistency. The higher the score, the greater the probable intensity or severity of the trait or issue tapped by the scale (Millon *et al.*, 1982). Standardized base rate scores on each scale can range from 0 to 100. Scores 75 and above

indicate areas that are viewed as unresolved and problematic for youths, with scores between 61 and 74 indicating some similarity with those manifesting the problematic traits or issues. Base rate scores between 35 and 60 fall in the average range and usually indicate neither positive nor negative consequences.

RESULTS

Music Preference: Factor Analysis and Participant Grouping

Responses to the measure of music preference (13 qualities; Finnas, 1987) were factor analyzed using a principal components analysis. The analysis revealed 2 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1; both factors (light and heavy music) contained the same items as were found by Finnas (1987). The reliability estimates for each music factor were more than acceptable (light music factor $\alpha = 0.83$, heavy music factor $\alpha = 0.73$). Total preference scores for the light and heavy categories were calculated by summing the ratings of their respective qualities and comparing the means for each participant. Participants whose mean difference between the light and heavy categories (light minus heavy) was less than 0.5 were assigned to the eclectic category ($N = 49$; 30% of sample). Those with positive and negative mean differences greater than 0.5 were assigned to the light ($N = 55$; 34% of sample) and heavy ($N = 60$; 36% of sample) music preference categories, respectively. An analysis of variance indicated no significant differences among the 3 groups in the amount of time they spent listening to music during the week, $F(2, 162) = 0.018$, $p > 0.05$.

Music Listening and Preference: Gender and Grade Differences

Participants reported listening to music over 3 h per day ($M = 22.4$ h per week). There was no significant difference between males and females nor between junior and senior high school participants in total music listening. Females preferred light music ($M = 3.09$) more than did males ($M = 2.46$), $F(1, 163) = 34.01$, $p < 0.001$; there was no significant difference between males and females in their preferences for heavy music. Senior high participants preferred light music ($M = 2.94$) more than did junior high participants ($M = 2.67$), $F(1, 163) = 5.48$, $p < 0.05$; there was no significant difference between junior and senior high adolescents in their preferences for heavy music. A between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance revealed no significant Grade × Gender

interactions in preferences for either light or heavy music qualities. Given the significant differences between male and female and junior and senior high adolescents in preferences for light music, however, both grade and gender were held constant (entered as covariates) in all remaining analyses.

Music Preference and Personality

An examination of scores in Table I revealed that for each of the 20 MAPI scales, the distribution of scores was similar to the standardization of the scale; thus, participants in this sample represented a general population of adolescents. Reliability of the total MAPI was also adequate ($\alpha = 0.76$), with the 20 MAPI scale alpha coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.89. Of the 20 scales, only 2 yielded small but significant age and gender differences. Females and junior high adolescents had more issues with both self-esteem (10% greater) and school attendance (13% greater) than did males and high school adolescents.

Between-subjects multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed on 20 dependent variables associated with personality styles (8 scales), expressed concerns (8 scales), and behavioral correlates (4 scales). The independent variable was music preference (heavy, light, eclectic), with gender and grade level entered as covariates. Using the Wilks' criterion, the combined scales of the MAPI were significantly related to music quality preference, $F(40, 280) = 1.60$, $p = 0.02$. The effects of

Table I. Descriptive Statistics for MAPI Scales

MAPI Scale	Mean	SD	Range
Introversive	38.01	21.85	0–97
Inhibited	53.79	24.80	1–113
Cooperative	42.05	23.26	1–100
Sociable	50.91	26.51	2–115
Confident	49.95	23.27	3–106
Forceful	58.98	25.08	5–109
Respectful	51.53	24.58	4–109
Sensitive	60.24	26.31	2–108
Self–Concept	57.24	21.33	1–109
Personal Esteem	70.52	22.41	13–109
Body Comfort	61.79	24.91	5–111
Sexual Acceptance	60.15	19.45	9–97
Peer Security	63.29	22.52	12–116
Social Tolerance	53.54	26.74	5–121
Family Rapport	62.01	28.79	0–125
Academic Confidence	54.00	23.13	0–108
Impulse Control	53.98	22.40	2–115
Societal Conformity	55.21	20.88	10–115
Scholastic Achievement	43.82	21.07	0–95
Attendance Consistency	54.47	20.16	3–110

music preference on the individual MAPI scales (after adjustment for covariates) were investigated using univariate analyses of covariance. These analyses, follow-up paired comparison tests (with Bonferroni corrections), and the MAPI base rate scores for each of the 3 music preference groups are presented in Table II.

Significant differences in MAPI base rate scores were found among the 3 music preference groups for 12 of the 20 scales: Cooperative, Forceful, Respectful, Sensitive, Sexual Acceptance, Peer Security, Social Tolerance, Family Rapport, Academic Confidence, Impulse Control, Societal Conformity, and Scholastic Achievement. An examination of Table II reveals that adolescents preferring heavy music had 8 MAPI scale scores significantly higher than one or both of the other music preference groups; 7 of these scores were greater than 60, indicating that they may be experiencing at least moderate difficulties in their development. Adolescents preferring heavy music were significantly more tough-minded and overly assertive in

Table II. Means, Standard Deviations, and Significant Differences (ANCOVA) in MAPI Base Rate Scores Among Light, Eclectic, and Heavy Music Preference Groups

| MAPI Scale | Music preference groups | | | |
	Light	Eclectic	Heavy	F
Introversive	38.9 (23.9)	39.6 (21.2)	35.9 (20.6)	0.57
Inhibited	56.7 (26.7)	48.1 (23.5)	55.8 (23.6)	1.77
Cooperative	47.3^a (22.7)	45.0^a (22.4)	34.9^b (23.0)	8.00***
Sociable	45.8 (26.1)	52.7 (26.0)	54.1 (27.0)	2.15
Confident	47.8 (23.91)	55.6 (23.6)	47.4 (22.0)	1.94
Forceful	49.4^b (23.2)	57.4 (22.3)	69.1^a (25.5)	12.44***
Respectful	60.4^a (23.4)	54.9^a (23.8)	40.7^b (22.5)	10.20***
Sensitive	56.0^b (28.4)	53.5^b (26.8)	69.6^a (21.2)	7.75**
Self-Concept	56.8 (22.8)	51.6 (23.6)	62.3 (16.6)	2.83
Personal Esteem	73.1 (24.6)	65.8 (23.4)	72.1 (19.0)	2.33
Body Comfort	67.3 (23.6)	57.1 (25.3)	60.6 (25.2)	2.26
Sexual Acceptance	67.6^a (16.6)	57.1^b (17.9)	55.9^b (21.3)	6.76**
Peer Security	69.8^a (23.9)	62.1 (21.8)	58.3^b (20.6)	3.77*
Social Tolerance	44.3 (25.7)	54.1 (23.4)	61.5^a (27.6)	6.76**
Family Rapport	57.1^b (29.2)	57.0^b (26.4)	70.6^a (28.8)	6.97**
Academic Confidence	48.9^b (21.5)	51.7 (20.1)	60.6^a (25.6)	5.24**
Impulse Control	45.7^b (20.8)	51.1^b (20.1)	63.9^a (22.2)	11.40***
Societal Conformity	47.3^b (16.7)	52.8^b (19.5)	64.5^a (22.1)	15.00***
Scholastic Achievement	38.9^b (21.2)	40.2^b (17.9)	51.3^a (21.5)	5.48**
Attendance Consistency	56.2 (22.9)	51.3 (21.9)	55.5 (15.6)	1.42

Note. Values represent M (SD). Means with superscript a are significantly greater than those with superscript b.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (Bonferroni corrections).

their relationships with others (Forceful scale) and significantly less concerned and indifferent to the feelings and reactions of others (Social Tolerance scale) than those preferring light music. They were significantly more moody, pessimistic, overly sensitive, and discontented (Sensitivity scale) and more likely to act on their impulses and disregard the rights of others to express themselves (Impulse Control scale) than those preferring light music or had more eclectic music tastes. Adolescents preferring heavy music were also significantly more uncomfortable and experiencing more problems within their families (Family Rapport scale) and were significantly more disrespectful of others and the rules of society (Societal Conformity scale) than those preferring light music or having eclectic music tastes. And finally, they had significantly more doubts in their ability to be successful in their academic efforts (Academic Confidence scale) than adolescents preferring light music had.

Adolescents preferring light music had 3 MAPI scale scores significantly higher than one or both of the other music preference groups; these scores were also greater than 60, indicating some difficulty in negotiating their development. Adolescents preferring light music were significantly overly responsible, rule-conscious, and conforming in their relationships with others (Respectful scale) than those preferring heavy music or having more eclectic music tastes. They were also struggling significantly more with their developing sexuality and felt more uncomfortable toward sexual relationships (Sexual Acceptance scale) than did the other 2 groups. Finally, they were significantly more concerned about being accepted by their peers and/or fitting in with their peers (Peer Security scale) than were those preferring heavy music.

There were no significant group comparisons in which the eclectic group scored above 60 on a MAPI scale. This indicates that the eclectic group experienced fewer issues associated with their personalities and/or in their development. Also, for 9 of the 12 significant contrasts, the eclectic group scale scores were between those of the light and heavy music preference groups. This suggests that the eclectic group likely exemplifies more typical development, with those indicating specific preferences for either light or heavy music experiencing more developmental difficulties as a result of their personality styles and developmental issues.

DISCUSSION

This study assessed personality dimensions and developmental issues as they relate to music preferences of adolescents. Thus, the findings are discussed in terms of the personality profiles directly derived from the

significant findings and their association with particular music preferences.

Profile of Adolescents Preferring Heavy Music

Adolescents preferring heavy music were more likely to beindependents or anticonformists who demonstrate lower self-esteem and higher self-doubt. They were more likely to question others' motives, abilities, and rules; communicate in a blunt and insensitive manner; and resist change when others (e.g., teachers, parents) attempt to persuade them. They were also more likely to be aggressive and viewed as adolescents who *are* problems as opposed to those who *have* problems (Millon *et al.*, 1982). These findings support and extend past research by using a clinically valid measure of personality and the corresponding developmental issues that likely underlie many of the findings of past research, e.g., rejection of authority, having distrust and uncaring attitudes about the feelings of others, acceptance of antisocial behavior, having less enjoyment in cognitive endeavors, and avoidance of school work (Arnett, 1991, 1992; Gordon *et al.*, 1992; Hakanen and Wells, 1993; Hansen and Hansen, 1990; Yee *et al.*, 1988).

Adolescents preferring heavy music were more likely to lack a stable sense of identity (a critical developmental task during adolescence) or may exhibit what Erikson (1968) called a negative identity. As a consequence, they may hold on to "known confusion and discomfort" (Millon *et al.*, 1982) rather than braving the unknown world in which building and maintaining a sense of identity is difficult (Steele and Brown, 1995; White, 1985). Listening to such music may be one of the ways with which they deal with this diffused identity status (Larson, 1995). By listening to music that has themes (e.g., distrust, lack of self-understanding) and sounds (e.g., harsh, distorted) that match their identity issues and feelings, they share with other listeners and the performers having similar characteristics. Thus, heavy music may (a) tell them that they are not alone in this developmental task, (b) give them a refuge for validating their confusions about identity, and (c) provide a safe context for beginning to explore and organize a sense of self (North and Hargreaves, 1999; Schave and Schave, 1989).

A preference for heavy music was associated with having higher levels of discomfort within the family and experiencing conflict with parents over independence/dependence issues. This finding corroborates the observation (Martin *et al.*, 1993) that adolescents who describe their family relationships as "not close" prefer heavier forms of music. Conflict and emotional disconnection within the family may result in these adolescents seeking other means of connection and validation. Thus, they

may align themselves with particular peer and/or musical groups who have similar difficulties and/or use music to reflect or distract them from these issues (Christensen and Roberts, 1998), thereby regulating their emotions to some degree.

A preference for heavy music was associated with a lack of connectedness, feeling rejected or being misunderstood by others, and experiencing problems in their formal intellectual pursuits. For such adolescents, listening to "upsetting and protesting" and "tough and hard" music likely reflects the quality and intensity of their internal states and assuages their turbulent emotions. For example, knowing that others have the same feelings as they have lets them know that they are not emotionally alone and that their feelings are real (Hrynchak and Fouts, 1998). This may be particularly applicable when listening to music performed by musicians similar in age or with whom they identify; such listening may provide a compensatory sense of connection and belonging that may not be available in their immediate environment. Heavy music may also help to distract themselves from volatile emotions with blaring external stimulation (e.g., Arnett, 1992; Litle and Zuckerman, 1986; McIlwraith and Josephson, 1985), thus escaping or avoiding uncomfortable moods and developmental issues (e.g., Roe, 1985; Rosenbaum and Prinsky, 1987; Thompson, 1990).

Profile of Adolescents Preferring Light Music

Adolescents preferring light music were more likely to be preoccupied with trying to do the right and proper things while still keeping their emotions in check. They also were more likely to have 2 developmental concerns, their sexuality and relationships with peers. In terms of their sexuality, they tended to have greater difficulty in reconciling childhood beliefs with new sexual impulses and the conflicting values surrounding the expression of sexuality. This finding is consistent that of Brown *et al.* (1993), who found that "intrigued" listeners surround themselves with sexual media content (presumably to explore the issues and feelings for themselves). They also exhibited some difficulty in negotiating the balance between independence from and dependency on peers, a finding consistent with Larson (1995) who reported that many of the themes of soft rock and Top 40 involve "codependency" in peer relationships. Since peer acceptance is importance during adolescence, such adolescents may want to share with other listeners and performers who are experiencing the same issues, with popular and mainstream music serving as the common ground (Frith, 1981, Lull, 1992).

These developmental issues likely produce a variety of negative and/or conflicting emotions, e.g., anxiety,

tender, excitement, confusion. Listening to light music provides validation for these emotions (e.g., Larson *et al.*, 1983; Roe, 1985; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 1987; Thompson, 1990) and likely helps them to regulate and express them (Arnett, 1995), e.g., by soothing disruptive feelings, letting them know they are not emotionally alone. Thus, light music may provide an emotionally safe vehicle for easing their transition into becoming more independent, expressive adults and finding meaningful connections (through music) with others.

Profile of Adolescents Having Eclectic Music Tastes

Adolescents having eclectic music tastes appeared to have less difficulty negotiating their adolescence. For example, in contrast to the other 2 groups, they were not experiencing significant issues regarding self-concept, dealing with authority, worrying about their sexuality and peer relationships, having problems with their families, nor experiencing academic concerns. This suggests that they were flexibly using music according to mood (e.g., to reflect and validate, to change), context (e.g., alone, with peers), and particular needs at the time (e.g., relationship, autonomy). It is unknown, however, whether having eclectic taste in music facilitates adolescent adjustment and/or whether those who are well-adjusted have eclectic tastes in music. Through learning more about this group, we may better understand the relationship between music listening and positive adolescent adjustment outcomes (e.g., positive family and peer relationships, scholastic performance, sexuality).

CONCLUSION

The pattern of findings indicates that each of the 3 music preference groups is inclined to demonstrate a unique profile of personality dimensions and developmental issues. This has important implications. First, knowing the music preferences of adolescents may be useful in assessing their internal reality; it is a "window" into their world. Such music preference may not only reflect the values, attitudes, and the feelings they experience (e.g., Avery, 1979; Mainprize, 1985; Steele and Brown, 1995), but also their success in negotiating a number of developmental issues. This may help parents, teachers, and counselors in establishing dialogue and facilitating adolescents in their dealing with normal developmental issues. Additional research that validates music preference as a measure of developmental issues is needed.

Second, adolescents having particularly strong (and perhaps rigid) music preferences may indicate important personality adjustment and/or developmental issues. Although the findings of this study do not imply a causal relationship between music listening and adolescent functioning, it may be possible that exposing such adolescents to a greater variety of music may promote greater self-exploration, validation, and normalization of their issues, thus enhancing their development. This is consistent with the view that repeated exposure to music "cultivates" existing personal attributes (Hansen and Hansen, 1990) and/or may influence adolescents' self-awareness (Steele and Browne, 1995). Further research is required to confirm this conjecture.

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