

# [Psychology and music violence](https://assignbuster.com/psychology-and-music-violence/)

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The Effects of Violent Music Content on Teenagers
Throughout history the human populous has been
attracted to music. Whether it be part of a ritual, an
emotional release, religious reasons, or just for
listening pleasure music has been at the center of our
society. We have used music to express ourselves, tell
stories, and let others into our thoughts. However, we
often wonder whether what we are saying has an effect on
the listening audience.
Recently, in the 1990's references have often been
made to link violent and deviant behavior to music and
certain music genres. Some such genres include but are
not limited to; heavy metal, rock, death metal, rap,
gansta rap, industrial, hardcore, and alternative music.
During the last decade we have seen music lyrics become
more and more violent and sexually explicit. Experts
argue that this can cause problems in children and
adolescents. Studies show that the average teenager
listens to approximately 40 hours of music in a given
week. One is to assume that somewhere in the mix a child
is going to hear something derogatory or objectionable, as
it has become the norm in todays society. In most music
today especially rap and heavy metal most of the lyrics
contain references to violence, sex, and/or drugs. While
many argue that this is dangerous for children to hear we
know that a modern day teenager often faces violence,
drugs, suicide, pregnancy, and other aspects of this
music.
While we find that lyrics may be dangerous to a child
we must ask ourselves whether the child fully understands
and comprehends what the artist is saying. Teenagers
often do not understand what is being said, in fact in one
study only 30 percent of those questioned knew the lyrics
to their favorite songs and they all had varied
comprehension as to what the message was. It could be
argued that if the lyrics were not included in the artists
booklet then the audience would never know what was being
said. Some lyrics are indeed harsh such as this Nine Inch
Nails lyric:
I am a big man yes I am; and I have a big gun; got
me a big ole \*censored\* and I like to have fun; held against
your forehead I'll make you suck; you know, just for
the \*censored\* of it.

Obviously we cannot interpret this as a positive meaning.
A sampling of lyrics from Marilyn Manson include Who says
date rape isn't fun, ... the housewife I will beat..,
and I slit my teenage wrist, among others. Manson
concerts are often grounds to bash religion and rip bibles
while fan chant we hate love, we love hate. Other songs
that have overtones of violence include slap-a-ho by
Dove Shack and another song sung by death metal band
Cannibal Corpse in which they make reference to
masturbating with a dead womans head. Avid music lovers
attest that they words sung in these songs are just words
and or no different that poetry printed in literature
books. No studies to date have concluded that listening
to a song that speaks of death will make a teenager want
to go out and kill.
Do these kinds of lyrics breed todays children to be
killers and to be sexually promiscuous? Yes, and no,
depending on who you speak to. Listening to music does
not drive people to kill, and no proof of such has been
offered. In fact, one teacher speaks of a student who
wore a Metallica shirt everyday to school and wrote lyrics
with foul language, but was often seen sitting in the
front row at Sunday mass with his mother in a nice suit.
The same people who go out to see Black Sabbath and Motley
Crue are the same people who handle world finance and
international affairs, it is just their choice in music.

Studies that use music videos on the other hand show
an increased tolerance in deviant behavior among both
males and females. Music videos add reinforcement to what
is being heard with the use of visuals. Now an extra
sense is being used. Videos often exhibit sexual
innuendo, acts of aggression, and gender stereotypes.
Studies showed that men have a tolerable attitude as to
what is violent and what is too far in sexual advances.
Women have less of a tolerance. Studies have also found
that heavy metal music and gansta rap influence mens
attitudes towards women and that increased exposure to
videos containing interpersonal violence against women
tended to increase men's acceptance of rape myths such as
she was dressing like she wanted it or she brought it
on herself. In contrast, women's beliefs decreased and
they felt that men were coming on too strong and being to
aggressive.
Another study conducted on college campuses in the
northwestern United States involved men and women watching
various music videos and then answering a set of questions
afterwards. One video was The Way You Make Me Feel by
Michael Jackson which depicts a man stalking a woman who
then becomes infatuated in his game of pursuit. The other
was The Stand by REM which only showed the band on-stage
playing instruments. In questions answered after the
videos men said it was necessary to pursue the woman to
such an extent while women thought it was annoying and/or
disturbing. Men scored higher on a attitudes for sexual
overtones, while surprisingly women scored slightly higher
on the acceptance of interpersonal violence. The studies
did conclude that women who were often subjected to
violent music videos were more accepting of violence than
those who have not had constant viewing or listening to
such lyrics and images. It also showed that men had a
greater acceptance of sexual stereotyping and rape myths
after being subjected to the videos.
Many methods of behavior modification have been
suggested in order to keep this music from causing harm or
hurting anyone individuals. Many arguments can be made as
to whether the music should be censored or if it is
unconstitutional to do. The American Academy of
Pediatrics recommends different types of behavior
modification to combat the harmful effects of this music.
One such idea is as simple as having parents be aware as
to what their children are listening to, and to discuss
anything they deem objectionable. This would be a
positive way to relate emotions to the songs. Another
idea proposed is labeling of content in compact discs. It
would be labeled outside as to what the lyrics contained
(i. e. language, sex, drugs). It has also been suggested
that groups as well as individuals approach record
companies, music studies, and artists and ask them to
consider the ramifications of their music on their
audience and market it accordingly and in a favorable
manner. Ideas have been proposed to set up research
studies to further investigate the effects of explicit
music on the behavior of teenagers. One of the most
effective ideas proposed is as simple as people accept
that this music is an art form and a means of self-
expression and emotional release and treat it as such.
Just as with rock and roll and Elvis Presley people will
always find something wrong with the music that others
listen to.