MEDIA INFLUENCE ON DEVIANT BEHAVIOR IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been growing concern over the possible influence of aggressive and sexually-explicit media on children and teenagers (Gore, 1987). It is believed that graphic depictions of violence, disrespect of women, and the glamorization of drug use are fostering similar behavior in the school-aged population. This anti-social subject matter is presented in movies, on television (programs and music videos), the internet, in the lyrics of popular music, and in video games. A generation ago, families would not have tolerated the sex and violence presented to children. The questions remains, have the behavior problems of America's youth increased over the past ten to twenty years? And is there a correlation between an increase in media presentations of sex and violence to children, and an increase in public tolerance or ignorance of graphic adult themes presented to children?

This thesis addresses the possible effects of exposure to various forms of violent and anti-social media as a significant factor contributing to anti-social and disruptive behaviors in middle school students in the school setting. The thesis also provides an overview of other factors identified in a review of relevant literature. These factors include lack of familial support, poor self-esteem and external locus of control. In addition, the thesis describes a study conducted with middle school students who have varying disciplinary records. The results of this study indicate that negative media, as a single factor, does not appear to be sufficient to account for anti-social or disruptive behavior of these students at school.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many studies of student behavior are included in educational journals and can be found through internet searches. The majority of the research on the effects of media examines the influence of media as a whole and not more specifically on the behavior of middle school students. My research started with the broad topic of deviant behavior in middle schools; e.g., the kinds of deviant behaviors, changes in their rates over time, and ways schools respond to them. Gradually, I began to focus also on possible causes of deviant behavior. Deviant behavior in middle school is significantly different from behavior that is commonly expected and accepted, and is in contrast considered anti-social, disruptive, dangerous, and socially inappropriate. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, classroom disruptions, outbursts, threats, fighting, and abusive or foul language. The basic question is whether exposure to media violence and anti-social role models is correlated significantly with the rates and kinds of deviant behavior in middle school students. In this thesis, media will include television, movies, video games, and popular music.

An historical view of violence in media reveals several changes, including increasing explicitness (e.g., clear visual and auditory presentations), intensity (killing), and moral ambiguity (no longer presented as socially deviant and pathological, but acceptable, or at least explained by social factors (such as poverty) and excused (Freedman, 2002). There has been a growing concern regarding the relationship between the various types of media and deviant behavior in young people. There appears to be a correlation between exposure to violent forms of media and violent acts by the senior

year in high school and early collegiate years. (Boehm, 2000). If these are valid and generalizable findings, then children need to be protected from exposure to violence and need immediate help from adults (e.g., to protect students or to remedy the negative effects of exposure).

In recent years, the entertainment industry, particularly the video game industry, has been reaping profits from the sale of violent imagery to children. Hypothetically, by instilling violent attitudes and behavior patterns in young people (e.g., such that students regard each other as targets of aggression and sexual predation), makers of violent imagery undermine values that are perhaps essential to civilized society (e.g., respect, self-control), and make it difficult for schools to achieve their manifest function. Author Neil Postman (1982) argues that we are living in a new dark age for children. For Postman, TV doesn't simply erode old distinctions, or dissolve the boundaries between child and adult; it obliterates any and all differences. There is no such thing as children's programming, he explains. 'Everything is for everybody'; television is 'the total disclosure medium'. Television gives children and teens access to *all* information. There are no more secrets. Television drives all mystery and awe from the imaginations of children and teens, it dangerously broadens exposure, giving unlimited access to the adult world, the consequences of which promise to be brutal. Exposed to extreme samples of the 'real world' through TV, a world filled with catastrophe, death and suffering, adults lose the appearance of omnipotence (which the youth of America apparently need) and, in the process, their authority over the young and vulnerable. In short, television programming can weaken children's ability to trust, believe in and rely upon the adult world. Some children remedy this deficit by developing their own culture, incorporating

information (role models, values, personality traits, justification for action) from the media that surround them.

There are disagreements about the possible connection between media and anti-social behavior. Some researchers say that the connection is a cognitive phenomenon—a connection of ideas, perceptions, attitudes. Other researchers argue that violent and sexually-explicit media have physiological effects that induce aggressive behaviors. Still others focus on the ways in which media violence primes or cues pre-existing aggressive thoughts and feelings. They believe these thoughts are already imbedded in the adolescent and seeing the images on television only increases the rates and intensities of anti-social thoughts. On television, the characters act out and usually do not receive any corrective consequences for their behavior. (Freedman, 2002)

Problem Statement

Deviant behavior in school can quickly foster additional problems for students, including ostracism, lower rates of interaction with teachers, less-supportive interaction with teachers, and therefore lower academic achievement. In consequence, these students may begin to act out—which produces a vicious cycle of increasing anti-social behavior and increasing social rejection. This may yield adverse changes in attitudes as these students do not gain the respect of teachers and later do not receive respect from more socially conventional persons (perhaps peers, family, and potential employers) in their adult life (Ananad,1998).

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between the media and deviant behavior in middle school students. Deviant behavior is measured in the number of and reason for discipline referrals given to students. Discipline referrals

are official forms (documents) that are given to students by the teacher; the student is then sent to the office to be reprimanded. On the form the teacher must fill out the nature of the problem and any actions that have been taken up to that point to prevent the problem. A discipline referral is the last action a classroom teacher takes when a student misbehaves. Based on school policy, other actions should be taken before a referral is given. Examples of previous actions might be moving the physical location of the student, redirecting behavior, phone calls to parents or punishment imposed by the teacher. Reasons for which a teacher might give out a discipline referral include class disruptions, fighting, and disrespect shown to the teacher.   Three groups of middle school students participated in the interview portion of the study. The first group was heterogeneous, ethnic backgrounds varied, as well as their number of discipline referrals within the past year. The second group also was heterogeneous, with students from various ethnic backgrounds and consisted of students with numerous discipline referrals. The third, and final group, was heterogeneous as well but consisted of students with no more than one referral. These particular students were given referrals for behaviors that included misbehaving, disrespect, not being prepared for class and skipping. None of the referrals were given for violent acts such as fighting.

Research Questions

　　Several questions were addressed either in the interview process or through questionnaires to identify a relationship between the exposure to anti-social media and disruptive or anti-social school behaviors. Before the students were given the interview questions, consent was obtained from parents and/or guardians. Students were chosen randomly from a group of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who have a record of

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discipline referrals, and interviews took place during their lunch break. The setting was
non-threatening and conducive to informal conversations. The following is a list of
questions used in the questionnaires

1. What types of music do you listen to?
2. What is your favorite type of music? Movie?
3. Do you like rap music?
4. How does that music make you feel when you listen to it?
5. Do you like rap/gangsta rap?
6. If so how does that particular type of music make you feel?
7. Do you watch music videos or play video games?
8. What is your favorite type of music video?
9. What do you like about that type of video?
10. What is your favorite song?
11. What words or lines do you remember? Can you recite them?
12. What words or lines do you like? Please recite those.
13. Who are your friends?
14. What groups in school do you hang out with?
15. What do you and your friends do for fun?
16. Do you listen to music together?
17. Do you watch music videos together?
18. What sort of feelings do you get when you are around your friends?
19. What do you get from hanging out with that group?
20. What do you contribute to the group?
21. How long have you been exposed to rap music/videos?
22. What are most of your discipline referrals for?
23. Can you remember what was going through your mind when the last incident occurred?
24. Give me your definition of a good person? A 'cool' person? A 'tough' person?
25. What is your definition of kindness?

26. How do you define violence?

27. Define what "a friend" means to you.

The student responses to these questions, review of literature, and personal observations were used in an attempt to draw conclusions as to the relationship of exposure to violence and adult themes through media and deviant behavior in middle school students.

In addition to structured interviews, the research involved ethnographic observations of middle school students in halls, cafeteria, and playground. The focus was on certain features of students' presentations of self (clothing, talk, mannerisms) and on certain interaction patterns that appeared to be common (e.g., forms of conversation). Students were then interviewed informally to discover their own perceptions and explanations for their behaviors, in an effort to determine any connections between these behaviors and media.

Finally, this thesis supplies a foundation for continued studies on deviant behavior of middle school students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will explore findings from research and literature on the effects of anti-social media on the behavior of children and teenagers. The information is organized into the following sections: (a) recurring anti-social thematic content in various types of media and the potential response to such content and (b) additional factors that render some children and teenagers more vulnerable to anti-social media.

Thematic Content

In reviewing the literature, the following themes emerged and will be discussed further: violence, social intolerance, and glamour and power.

Violence

One of the most evident recurring themes in anti-social media is violence. Ananad (1998) states, "The effect of media violence on our children is no longer open to debate. The exceedingly violent portrayals in the media in the form of films, documentaries and even cartoons have firmly placed the media in the midst of a controversy with far reaching effects" (p. 3). He expresses concern that young people in our society are being exposed to increasing amounts of graphic media violence through television, movies, video games and popular music. Ananad further describes, "Action films depict anatomically precise murder, rapes, assaults and video games detail bodies being blown apart, splattering blood and body parts on walls and floors" (p. 4).

Minnow, Newton and LaMay (1995) also identify violence as a prevalent theme in forms of media to which young people are most exposed. They estimate that an

average American child will view over 200,000 televised acts of violence by the age of 18. Minnow, Newton and LaMay contend that young people tend to imitate the actions and behaviors that they observe without the maturity to discern whether the action is appropriate or correct.

Clinkscales (1997) agrees that imitation, or at least acceptance of violence is a frequent response to excessive exposure to violence in the media. Clinkscales states, "Children also develop what is known as a 'gore fascination.' Due to the gore filled nature of much of the video games and media programming, children become fascinated with gore. These children grow up with a stronger idea of becoming violent or being a violent-acceptant person (p.7).

Martinez (1997) argues that while not all children who are exposed to violence will themselves become violent, there are other potentially harmful consequences. "Media violence can promote pessimistic attitudes about the non-television world and it can also desensitize children to real-world and fantasy violence. Violent programming often shows violence as being justified, going unpunished and having minimal consequences to the victim. "The portrayals of extensive graphic and humorous violence promoted an increased tolerance of violence" (p. 13).

There appears now to be widespread acceptance of a correlation between screen violence and aggression. Wartella (1995), after an in-depth review of studies from around the world, summarizes: "More than a thousand studies in the United States and dozens within Europe have been devoted to this topic ... Distilling decades of laboratory, survey and field experimental studies, the current reviews conclude that there is a correlation between violence viewing and aggressive behavior, a relationship that holds even when a

variety of controls are imposed (e.g. age of subject, social class, education level, parental behavior, attitudes towards aggression)..."

Public outcries for increased censorship or stricter controls to protect children from unregulated media are often hard to resist, as David Buckingham (2001) has argued, because these forms of simulated media violence are framed as a real violence directed against children themselves. Peter Scales (2001) argues that many adults continue to see childhood violence as on the rise even though quite the opposite is the case. Alissa Quart (2001) adds to this that parents also presume that this rise must be attributable to television and video games, which a vast army of 'media effects' experts have been unable to demonstrate. Quart cites the author Steven Kline, who writes that children are made to learn how to be consumers of violence by the $20 billion a year video industry. Others have criticized such views for too simplistically picturing children as passive receptors victimized by wholesale manipulation. Nevertheless, children's television in the US was deregulated in 1984 by the FCC (the Federal Communications Commission), which has led to a broadening of the marketing of 'violent' products for children, as Diane Levin (1998) has pointed out. The questions remains, however, is there any credible evidence that media violence causes children to act more violently than they likely would if otherwise not exposed?

Social Intolerance

Much of the literature reviewed in this study mentions various forms of social intolerance as a common theme in media. Of particular concern are the stereotypical portrayals of minorities and the demeaning treatment of women. Costello (1990) observes that minority males are often depicted as aggressive and abusive toward anyone

perceived as weaker than them. "They treat women purely as sexual property in unrealistic and shamefully submissive situations" (p.12). Costello further states that the images of powerful men who take what they want from those who are not as powerful, fosters the notion that, "…aggression equals power and weakness deserves disrespect" (p.12). He concludes that there is a definite connection between these images and a growing disrespect among young males toward female peers and females in positions of authority, such as teachers. In addition, he explains that, while "survival of the fittest" is certainly not a new theory, the influence of media is creating an unhealthy acceptance of abusive and disrespectful behaviors toward anyone considered weak or disadvantaged by media standards. According to Esparza (1995), the disrespect extends to … "anyone who chooses to settle arguments peacefully, act within the law, or values women as cognitive beings" (32).

Glamour and Power

According to Boehm (2000), much of what young people view on television, in movies and in music videos focuses on glamorous, albeit unrealistic, acquisition of fame and fortune. Powerful men are depicted in lavish homes or driving expensive cars and surrounded by beautiful women. Examples of this include "MTV Cribs" and "This is My Life". One implication is that this lifestyle is a result of some innate and effortless talent. For example, the child who grew up poor in the ghetto becomes the famous rap star, or the pro athlete. Boehm notes that the hard struggle, the intense competition and the low odds are missing from the storyline. The value is then placed on the final materialistic outcome as the true accomplishment, not the persistence or the hard work.

Illegal activity for the purpose of material gain is also frequently portrayed in various forms of media. Boehm states, "This activity ranges from the highly successful pimp, to the master thief, to the thug who simply takes what he wants by force. The hero is rarely shown as the successful executive or the factory worker who measures success by his work ethic and integrity while in a meaningful monogamous relationship" (p.11).

McDonnell (1995) attributes a rise in juvenile crime, in part, to the emphasis placed on materialism in the media. He states, "Unfortunately, the youth of our society seems to measure social standing and popularity in terms of expensive clothing, jewelry and electronic equipment, intentionally or inadvertently advertised at every turn. "Equally disturbing is their willingness to resort to illegal means of attaining items they desire" (p. 4).

Factors That Increase Vulnerability to Media Influence

Family Environment

In considering the influence of family status on student behavior, the most frequently noted situation is that of separation and divorce. According to Morgan (1994), separation and divorce is a process of disorganizing and reorganizing that can extend over a period of several years and cause great frustration to all involved. Morgan further contends that the presence of continuity and support from the family structure is essential to a child's sense of well-being. Disruption of this structure can lead to feelings of insecurity, displacement and alienation. These students do not feel a sense of belonging and acceptance in the home or at school. How children respond is often reflected in behavioral performance at school. Morgan argues that when the home is unstable, children may be inclined to withdraw into the fantasy world of media to escape their own

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unstable reality. These students tend to imitate negative or disruptive behaviors that gain

the attention of their peers.

Abuse is an important risk factor in the category of family circumstances.

Inappropriate behaviors at school can often be a result of an abusive environment. Such

behaviors may even be an attempt to gain sympathy and understanding or to vent anger

and frustration associated with abuse. Some students may respond to abuse by becoming

abusive themselves or by turning to gang involvement for acceptance and belonging

(Callison, 1994; Morgan, 1994; Ogden & Germinario, 1988). Roderick (1993) warns

that, "When children live in an environment of abuse and violence, exposure to images of

violence on television serves to reinforce that this type of behavior is normal" (p. 29).

Roderick contends that media alone is not a primary factor that significantly influences

negative behavior, but in conjunction with the other factors previously mentioned, it can

have a significant effect.

Socioeconomic Environment

The attitude of the parents toward education is a major variable in student success

and behavior at school directly impacts academic performance (Davies, 1985).

According to Roderick (1993), students from disadvantaged families are more likely to

have behavioral problems throughout their school careers. Rumberber (1983) finds that

parents in disadvantaged homes are less likely to encourage their children to strive for

high achievement and less likely to monitor the school performance of their children.

Rumberber also reports that disadvantaged parents are also less likely to provide an

environment in the home that consistently models expectations for appropriate behavior

at school. In addition, these parents are less likely to closely monitor what their children

watch on television or the music that they listen to. Roderick and Rumberber agree that without appropriate role models, or active parental monitoring of media, negative media easily becomes an influential model for behavior. Research has shown that economic conditions can influence children both directly through the resources that economic conditions can afford, and indirectly by causing parental distress and consequently impaired parenting (Conger, et. al, 1997).

Race and Gender

According to Wehlage and Rutter (1987), after controlling for family background, race is not a factor that predicts unacceptable school behavior. The same holds true for behavior in gender comparisons in which all other factors are equal. In other words, students are not more likely to misbehave in school simply because of race or gender. However, according to Boehm (2000), when other variables that increase vulnerability to media influence are present, boys are more likely to exhibit physically aggressive misbehavior than girls.

Locus of Control

Smey-Richman (1988) and Houston (1988) discuss a connection between the above-mentioned factors that influence behavior and what they term "locus of control." This term refers to what an individual believes in regard to personal control over success and failure, good behavior and bad. An individual, who believes that an event or outcome is dependent on personal characteristics, behavior, or ability, has an internal locus of control. An individual who believes that an event or outcome is caused by factors beyond the individual's control (e.g., luck, task difficulty, biased teacher) has an external locus of control. Houston (1988) states that those students who attribute success

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or failure to external factors, such as luck or nature of the task, tend to have lower self-esteem, exhibit more inappropriate behaviors, and frequently blame the teacher or other classmates for their behavior. Smey-Richman writes that these students tend to be easily influenced by external factors (media, peer pressure, negative role models) due to a lack of self-control or the ability to discern appropriate behaviors. Conversely, students with a strong internal locus of control are less vulnerable to the influence of negative media, even when other factors are present. These students tend to be more successful in school, both academically and behaviorally.

After reviewing the research and literature it appears that there are many factors that influence the pro-social vs. anti-social behavior of young adults and children. Much of what happens with the lives of America's youth depends on their family life and the values of their parents or guardians. This information led me to examine the extent to which the media affects students in the middle school. Is it a coincidence that there is an increase in anti-social media content directed at school-aged children and an increase in anti-social behavior in school-aged children?

CHAPTER III

MEDIA EXAMPLES

<u>Self Image</u>

The images portrayed in today's hip – hop media culture either stem from or

foster groups that portray themselves as outsiders. 'Hip - Hop' is a cultural movement

that began among urban African Americans and Latinos in the Bronx borough of New

York City during the early 1970s, and has since spread around the world and crosses all

races. The standard hip – hop fashions, baggy jeans, loose clothing, "doo-rags", long

chains ("bling-bling") with big charms are all worn by the rappers/actors and emulated by

America's youth. The items (clothing, gestures, and speech) and their display may

operate in the following way. The display signifies alienation from and rejection of

common cultural values and definitions of socially appropriate behavior. This difference

fosters and also legitimizes anti-social behavior. Anti-social behavior evokes social

rejection from norm-abiding persons and groups, which solidifies the outsider group's

self-definition. Disrespect, threats, violence, sexual predation, and law breaking then

become further signs of group membership and personal identity. This sequence was

depicted in several movies and videos, including "New Jack City," which concerns the

history of rap and drug related violence in cities across America. Rappers become street

wise with their abilities and sell drugs to make money for studio time. The music they're

making strengthens their hopes of getting out of the ghetto. The connotative names of

popular rappers, such as "Old Dirty Bastard," "Ghost Face Killa," "Bad Boy Kill's,"

"Dirty Rotten Scoundrals," "Scarface," "Naughty by Nature," and "Flatliners," just to

name a few, speak for themselves.

Many of the lyrics of these rappers speak of domestic violence, rape, and murder as a symbol of personal identity and out-group membership. A famous rapper/actor, Ice Cube, sings "Here is a little something about a nigga like me, never should have been let out the penitentiary." "Big Tymers" speak of "being from around the way, since I was youth I smoked weed out, now I'm the motherf*&%! you read about. Taking a life or two that's what I do." These artists address their message not only to Black students but to whites and Latinos as well. The white rapper, Limp Bizkit, in his song entitled "Break Stuff," sings "I pack a chainsaw, I skin your ass raw, and if my day keeps going this way I just might, break your f*#*'n face tonight." The images of offensive attitudes and destruction continue to come out of lyrics such as these. White rappers such as Eminen also become aggressive during their shows; they jump from the stage to fight and threaten that "if anyone messes with him, someone from the streets, the disrespect will result in that person paying the price."

In his song entitled, "We Don't Care," Kanye West has children singing the chorus about kids and drugs. During the chorus several kids join in with Kanye and sing about the notion that many of today's youth on the streets aren't 'supposed' to live until they are 25 years old. He continues with the idea that they shouldn't care about anything and the kids should go on living their life the way it is.

> *We Don't Care*
> *[Chorus]*
> *[Kanye West:]*
> And all my people thats drug dealin jus to get by stack ya
> money till it gets sky high
> We wasnt supposed to make it past 25 but the jokes on you
> we still alive

Throw your hands up in the sky and say we don't care what people say

[Verse One:]
If this is your first time hearing this
You are about to experience something cold man
We never had nothing handed took nothing for granted
Took nothing from no man, man i'm my own man
But as a shorty i looked up to the dopeman
Only adult man i knew that wasnt a broke man
Flickin starter coats man, Man you ount no man
We don't care what people say
This is for my niggas outside all winter
Cuz this summer they aint finna to say next summer im finna
Sittin in the hood like community colleges
This dope money here is Lil Treys scholarship
Cause aint no to tuition for havin no ambition
And aint no loans for sittin your ass at home
So we forced to sell crack rap and get a job
You gotta do something man your ass is grown

[Chorus]
[Kanye West:]
Drug dealin jus to get by stack ya money till it gets sky high

Kids Sing Kids Sing

[Kanye and Kids:]
We wasn't supposed to make it past 25 but the joke's on

you we still alive

Throw your hands up in the sky and say we don't care what

people say

[Verse Two:]

The second verse is for my dogs working 9 to 5

That still hustle cause a nigga can't shine off $6.55

And everybody selling make-up, Jacobs

And bootleg tapes just to get they cake up

We put shit on layaway then come back

We claim other people kids on our income tax

We take that money cop work than push packs to get paid

And we don't care what people say

Momma say she wanna move south

Scratchin lottery tickets Eyes on a new house

Around the same time Doe ran up in dudes house

Couldn't get a job

So since he couldnt get work he figured he'd take work

The drug game bolemic its hard to get weight

So niggas money is homo its hard to get straight

So we gon keep baking to the day we get cake.

And we don't care what people say

My Niggas

[Chorus]
[Kanye West and Kids:]
Drug dealin jus to get by stack ya money till it gets sky

high

Kids Sing Kids Sing

We wasn't supposed to make it past 25 but the joke's on
you we still alive
Throw your hands up in the sky and say we don't care what
people say

[Verse Three:]
You know the kids gonna act a fool
When you stop the programs for after school
And they DCFS them some of them dyslectic
They favorite 50 Cent song's 12 Questions
We scream, rock, blows, weed park
so now we smart
We aint retards the way teachers thought
Hold up hold fast we make mo'cash
Now tell my momma i belong in the slow class
It's bad enough we on welfare
You trying to put me on the school bus with the space for
the wheel chair
Im trying to get the car with the chromy wheels here
You tryin to cut our lights like we dont live here
Look at whats handed us our fatheres abandoned us
When we get the hammers gone and call the ambulance
Sometimes i feel no one in this world understands us
But we don't care what people say
My Niggas

[Chorus]
[Kanye West and Kids:]
drug dealin jus to get by stack ya money till it gets sky high

Kids Sing Kids Sing

We wasn't supposed to make it past 25 but the joke's on

you we still alive

Throw your hands up in the sky and say we don't care what

people say

(Serg, S, 2000)

Kanye West sings about having only one option due to the way he was raised, drug dealing. The kids that sing the chorus in this song claim that their life expectancy is only 25 years old. They don't have high expectations of life or living. Drug dealing is the only way to survive based on the lyrics from this song. The children's fathers left them and society has forgotten about them. The rappers consistently ignore the possibility that their hip- hop lifestyle is a major reason why they cannot find work and live in conventional society.

Glamorizing the Disrespect of Women

There are many negative and destructive themes in music, including award winning albums. A few of these themes include promoting and glamorizing the abuse of drugs and alcohol, suicide, violence, and sex which centers around control, sadism, masochism, incest, diminishing women's self esteem and violence against women.

Music videos often depend on sexual content to attract the attention of an audience. Women in music videos occupy a "dream world" where the standards of femininity, nymphomania, and reliance on and subservience to men. In these videos, women outnumber men, the magnetism between man and women is instantaneous, and sex happens without courtship. Sexual gratification is guaranteed for men. This tends to

encourage men to think of women primarily as sexual objects and emotions and to mock the values of compassion and respect. The role of male is no longer to reveal and perform maleness by taking care of and protecting women, but instead to bond with other males via ritualized abuse of women.

Not only are we dealing with sexuality on a level that encourages tolerance of sexual predation and violence, but some rappers (e.g., Eminem) have broadened the category of "weak and therefore target" to include gays and even family members. He portrays himself; indeed, he celebrates himself and his misogynistic attitudes, as a violent homophobic. Eminem frequently raps about wanting to kill "fags and lezzes" and beating or killing women. He often fantasizes in his lyrics about killing his mother and his girlfriend, aka "the ho," as shown in the following lyrics.

She's The One

"She the one that ain't really got shit, huh
The little bitch that really aint got tits, huh
F##** slut with a chest enhanced,
Wouldn't dance if you aint pay for her breasts implants"

[In other words, women with small breasts are not worthy
of respect and those that enhance themselves surgically
deserve no mercy either. A women can only afford
implants if a man pays for them and she repays him with
'dances'.]

"Wattup Miss. Bitch
(Yo what's up with the ring, you married?)
Shit, I'm still mingling, bitch

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I just wanted to scream, this is the only finger that's it

Wattup with you, you married?

(Naww, I'm divorced)

Of course you are, you little f#**# trailer park whore

(Trailer? I don't live in no trailer. I live in a mobilization

unit, for your information)

Bitch, I got a dick, wanna f**%?

[Here he reduces masculinity to mere body parts and

associates women that live in trailers to being whores.]

Hold still, so i don't use birth control pills slut

F$%#, pump so much c*% in your stomach that when I

pull out

A years and a half old body, deranged baby fall out

[Here he defines power as the ability to abuse. He also

demoralizes the women and her ability at reproduction.]

And I ain't stayin to pay no child support

Are you playin? Be a man- bitch what you sayin?

You tryin to pull some bullshit, while I got one arm free

You want me to make this half-nelson a full?"

[He ends with a threat of violence if the woman resists or

tries to get child support in the event of a pregnancy.]

(Serg, S, 2000)

In this and many cases, the rapper goes far beyond merely portraying violence and sex. It is not simply hitting and coupling. It calls for and valorizes degradation of the sex object. It elevates the most coarse and primitive impulses to the status of virtues and signs of manhood.

Another example of sexually explicit lyrics is a song performed by the widely popular rap artist, "50 cent." He incessantly raps about women and how their role should be to please a man. He glamorizes sex and the need for any women that will please him. At no point in any of his songs does he require that marriage be a requirement for sex. An example of his attitude is apparent in the following song.

Candy Shop

"If you be a nympho, I'll be a nympho
In the hotel or in the back of the rental
On the beach or in the park, it's whatever you into
Got the magic stick, I'm the love doctor
Have your friends teasin you 'bout how sprung I gotcha
Wanna show me how you work it baby, no problem
Get on top then get to bouncing round like a low rider
I'm a seasons vet when it come to this shit
After you broke up a sweat you can play with the stick
I'm tryin to explain baby the best way I can
I melt in your mouth girl, not in your hands (ha ha)

Give it to me baby, nice and slow
Climb on top, ride like you in the rodeo
[The sexual act is between two non-committed people, and
the act of sex is animalistic.]

You ain't never heard a sound like this before

Cause I ain't never put it down like this

Soon as I come through the door she get to pullin on my

zipper

It's like it's a race who can get undressed quicker

Isn't it ironic how erotic it is to watch em in thongs

Had me thinking 'bout that ass after I'm gone

I touch the right spot at the right time

Lights on or lights off, she like it from behind

So seductive, you should see the way she wind

Her hips in slow-mo on the floor when we grind

As Long as she ain't stoppin, homie I aint stoppin

Drippin wet with sweat man its on and popping

All my champagne campaign, bottle after bottle its on

And we gon' sip til every bubble in the bottle is gone"

[The rapper presents mere body fluids and primitive

biological processes as signs of a perverse sort of heroism.

Ironically, anyone can do what he does. The rapper and his

accepting audiences may not see just how pathetic their

version of manhood is.]

(Serg, S, 2000)

Laying Blame on Absent Fathers

In the following lyrics Emimen raps about the need for a father and the reasons he

feels he is misdirected. This theme is common among rap artists.

8 Mile

 "And get a new plan, momma's got a new man

Poor little baby sister, she don't understand

Sits in front of the TV, buries her nose in the pad

And just colors until the crayon gets dull in her hand

While she colors her big brother and mother and dad

Ain't no tellin what really goes on in her little head

Wish I could be the daddy that neither one of us had

But I keep runnin from somethin I never wanted so bad!"

(Serg, S, 2000)

In this autobiographical film, "8 Mile," Eminem watches his little sister (which in real life is his little brother) as she colors pictures of an imaginary mother-father family. She is obviously unable to understand that "mommas got a new man…wish I could be the daddy that neither of us had." There appears to be a lot of anger directed towards absent fathers and an ongoing theme of parental loss, abuse and neglect. Gangster rapper, Tupac Shakur, who died in a shootout in 1996 at the young age of 25, grieves over his youth when he sings "had to play catch by myself...Please send me a Pops before puberty." Snoop Doggy Dogg, another rapper who has a history of committing crimes, offers this justification for how he turned out: "It's probably pop's fault how I ended up...Gangbangin'...crack slangin...not givin' a f#*%."

The songs mentioned here are samples of the popular songs played on radio and in the homes of our youth. In these songs men use women as sex objects, they desire a relationship with their fathers, and they speak of drugs and material wealth as things taken for granted in their lives. This led to my questioning middle school students to find

out if they are listening to this kind of music and if it has any impact, negative or positive, on their daily lives and attitudes.

Description of Fairlawn School

Fairlawn Middle School has a fifty-eight percent African-American and a thirty-eight percent Caucasian population. Four percent of Fairlawn's students are considered 'ESL,' meaning they speak English as a second language. When a Fairlawn student misbehaves in class or commits an anti-social act in the school a referral is written for the student by the teacher. All of the referrals are kept on file for each student in the Dean's office. The following graphs represent the racial breakdown of Fairlawn's population and show the correlation between exposure to questionable media and number of referrals given during the school year.

Table 1- Fairlawn Middle School Racial Breakdown
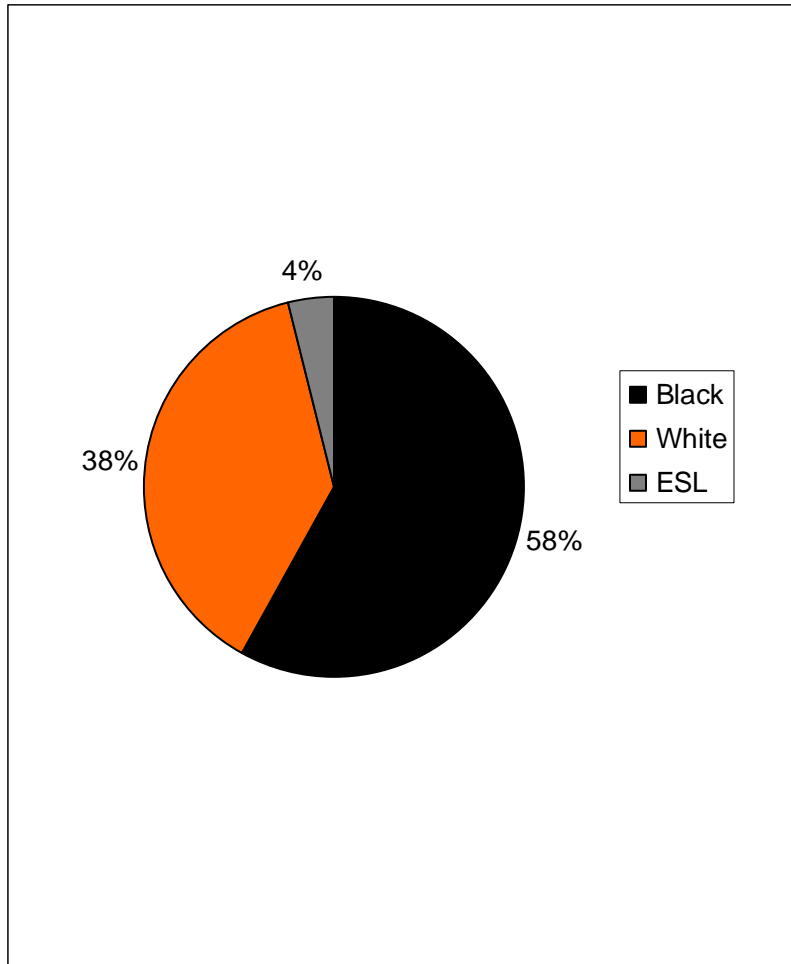
Based on FMS 2003-2004

Table 2- Fairlawn Middle School Referral/Exposure Breakdown
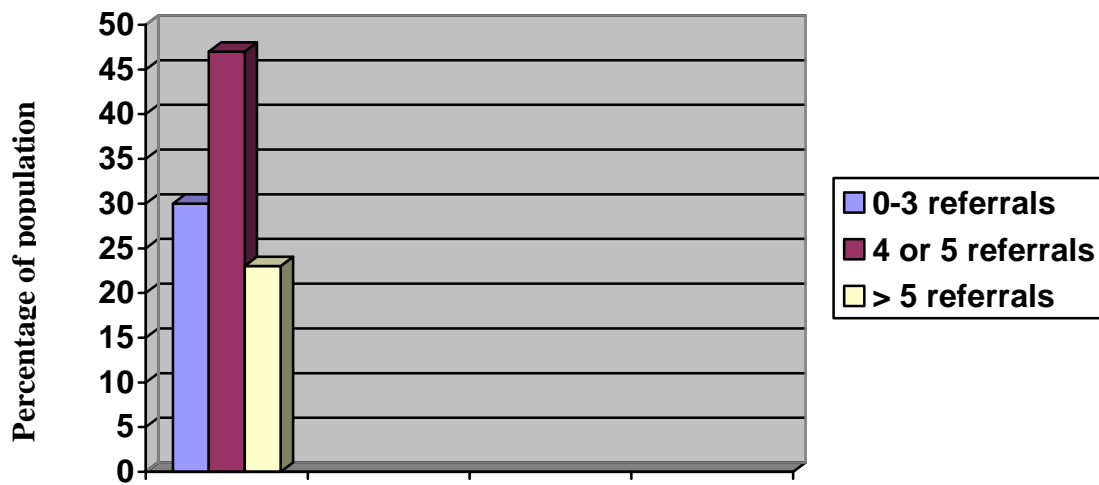
Based on all FMS students that have been exposed to violent media and/or questionable role models

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS OF

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Fairlawn Middle School served nine hundred thirty eight students in the school year 2005-2006. Of those students, fifty eight percent or five hundred forty four are African-American, thirty eight percent or three hundred fifty six are Caucasian and the remaining four percent make up the ESL population (see Table 1).

<u>Ethnographic Observations</u>

In searching for displays of anti-social behavior in the school setting I found numerous situations where the students emulated rap stars or various entertainment icons. So many of Fairlawn's student population dresses and acts according to the way they perceive hip-hop stars and professional athletes to dress and behave that certain forms of anti-social behavior have become normalized. While taking notes for ethnographic research, I observed some very interesting student/student interactions, as well as teacher/student interactions. While observing, one tries to make some sort of sense of the things that are happening and the relationships between the interactions. In a middle school setting, there are numerous explanations for certain interactions. It appears, through my observation, that the media has a strong influence on students and their decisions.

Middle school students emulate the looks and behaviors of different media personalities, including rappers and professional athletes. Observations reveal oversized clothing; baggy jeans, shirts, baseball caps turned backwards, and scarves of these artists, being worn by the students in the halls of middle schools everyday.

<u>Cafeteria Observations</u>

Students in the cafeteria are asked to sit with their own classes during lunch. This means that if their best friends are not in that specific class, they must befriend other students to interact with during lunch. This didn't seem to pose a problem based on my observations. At one particular table a group of students were discussing the NBA game televised the previous night. They spoke of how certain players dominated the ball and the opposing team. The language they used was obviously slang for terms used in basketball. Terms like, 'slammed' and 'juked' were being thrown around in the conversation. The students involved in this particular incident all wore jerseys of different NBA teams and each of them was sorely oversized. I asked them why they decided to purchase a jersey that didn't fit. Their response was a resounding, "Man, Kobe don't wear tight jerseys. You gotta have room to groove and dominate other players." Next I asked them if they thought that an education was important to NBA players. One of the students jumped in with an answer immediately. His response was, "No way man, you think if I had the chance to make eight million a year I wouldn't think twice about quittin' school." I questioned him about injuries and the reality of not being able to play. He said that as long as he could play one year he would make enough to retire off of and then he would live off of sponsorships as well. It appears that middle school students aren't able to comprehend the realistic world.

At another table some of the female students were singing and laughing. I walked over and asked what they were doing. After I explained that they were not going to be in any trouble they answered and said they were singing Missy Elliott's new song, "Hot

Boyz". I asked them to sing a few lines for me and they were very excited to do so. They began:

 Baby you got what I want

See cuz y'all be drivin?Lexus jeeps

And the Benz jeeps, and the Lincoln jeeps

Nothin?cheaper, got them Platinum Visa's

Hot boyz

Baby you got what I want

See cuz y'all be drivin?Jaguars

And the Bentley's, and the Rolls Royce

Playin?hardballs wit?them Platinum Visa's

Luckily, for me, that was all that they wanted to perform for me. I asked them what the message in the song was and one of the girls replied, "It's about finding and keeping the hot boys that have the nice toys." I asked her if she could get an education and buy those "expensive toys" for herself and she replied, "Yea, I guess but if I can find a boy that already has that stuff then it will save me some time." I wondered if the girls were influenced in any way by the way Missy Elliott dresses so I asked them about her image and influence. The girls all agreed that she was a cool dresser and they tried to dress like her most of the time. They said that some of her clothes weren't appropriate for school though because of the shortness of her skirts.

I then moved over to another table of guys that were being loud and boisterous. Once I had gotten closer I could hear they were all talking about the latest news about a

famous rapper, NAS that had recently been shot by a drive-by shooter. They thought it was cool that he lived and talked about the revenge he would probably be seeking now that he is recovered from the injury. I asked one of the boys why he thought it was so cool that a guy got shot. He said he thought the fighting between rappers added to the reputations of such rappers and he liked that they were so tough. The boys couldn't wait until NAS found the guy and got revenge. I asked them if they thought the law would find the other guy and prosecute him. They said that never happened in Los Angeles based upon viewing the television program, "COPS." The rappers always got away with breaking the law. They said the police were too scared to get involved. It was interesting how the boys believed that the rappers were almost like make-believe characters in a video game with no repercussions for their actions.

Playground Observations

There were typical activities on the playground, such as basketball, football, soccer, and jump rope. I approached some of the groups and asked about their involvement in the activity. Some of the responses included, "Mr. Pearson, we are playing ball," or "Mr. Pearson, we are ballin." Some of the other verbs they used included, "kickin," "chillin," "jumpin," and "playin." These are all terms that seemed to be consistent with the day-to-day interactions of the population at Fairlawn Middle School, used by all races interchangeably. The students that participated in the "jumpin", or jump rope, were chanting and reciting lyrics to a song they had seen on television that was associated with jumping rope. The groups that participated in basketball, football, and soccer had a good competitive nature. Some of the things that were said in these groups included, "man, you can't hold me," "man, nobody can slow me down," and

"man, your game is tired." Some students would push their opponents after scoring a basket or get into each other faces because of a hard foul. These types of vocabulary and interactions are often displayed on televised professional basketball games.

<u>Hallway Observations</u>

As the students moved into the building, the social interactions continued with conversations about the game and what had happened. "Man, we killed you guys, your game is weak," "man, you guys had problems on the court" and "man, you're sorry." It was obvious that the playground antics continued into the hallway and classroom. For the most part, it was general playfulness but on occasion has escalated into aggression.

I observed middle school students during several transition periods in the hallways. During one particular observation period, the seventh grade students at Fairlawn Middle School had just finished lunch and were transitioning to class. After eating, the students are allowed to go onto the playground for recreational activities. At approximately 1:05 p.m., the teacher raised her hand to signify that it was time to return to the building for class. It was clear that the teacher had set expectations for lining up to return to class after lunch. A majority of the students lined up in a reasonable amount of time. Some of the students strolled in, taking their time to get in line thereby delaying the process. As the students walked into the building, I observed some horse playing. Some students were slapping and joking around with each other. One group of female students were walking and singing and as they came closer to me, I noticed their smiles and they were walking to the beat of the song they were singing. As they approached I asked one of them what they were singing and where they had heard that song. They literally looked at me as if I had four heads. They replied, "Mr. Pearson, now you know we heard those

songs on our CD players. We got all da' new stuff. It's J-Lo, ain't you heard of her?" I

asked them if they ever listen to music other than hip-hop and they replied unanimously,

"Never." One asked, "Why would we, that other stuff is no good!" I asked her why she

thought that and she said that the other musicians were not as cool and didn't try to

portray themselves that way. Near the back of the line, a group of male students, four

African-Americans and two Caucasians, seemed to be singing as well. It became obvious

the male students were rapping. It was difficult for me to make out what they were

rapping about but it was obvious that they were doing their own editing of the words.

During certain parts of the rap, the students would mumble through or decrease their

volume and look at each other while laughing. Some of the males were making funny

noises while other recited the song as they all danced and walked at the same rhythm.

The scene created by these students as they walked to class was very jovial but not to a

point of being out of hand. One of the boys had a hat on backwards while on the blacktop

and quickly took it off when he noticed I was watching. I asked him, "Just out of

curiosity, why did you have your hat on backwards?" He replied, "That's how all da'

niggas where 'em now." After he said it in that particular way he quickly acted as if he

had said something wrong and immediately apologized for using that language. I told him

I would let it go that time but to be cognizant of the way he speaks around others from

now on. I then asked him why he used the term "nigga" and if it was ok for others to use

it. He stated firmly that no one else would be permitted to call him that but since he did it,

it was fine. I asked him if he heard terms like that often in the music he listened to and he

was hesitant to answer me. He acted as if he would be in trouble for listening to music

with such graphic language. But, in the end, admitted that he did listen to graphic

language in his music and thought that it made the music more enjoyable--as if he was getting away with something he shouldn't be doing. I stopped the next group of girls and asked them if they were in favor of school uniforms. They adamantly disagreed with even the idea of enforcing uniforms. One of the young girls stated that she wouldn't be able to flaunt her individuality. I asked her what she meant and she said that she enjoyed being able to show people her personality with the clothes that she chose. I asked what influenced her clothing style and they all wanted to answer that question at once. I heard answers like Missy Elliot (a hip-hop star), MTV, rap stars and television. A few also said they would move to another school if they couldn't choose their own clothes to wear to school.

    <u>Classroom Observations</u>

    The science class had been studying the cell theory and various cell parts. As the class came into the room they all quickly settled into their seats to begin the lesson. I entered the room for a general observation. The class started at approximately 1:15 p.m., in which the students began their bell work for the day, answering some introductory question related to the cell. Everyone in the class was on task for the most part. There were a few students discussing questions at their pods a little too loudly as determined by the teacher and one group had finished early and began to play around, therefore disrupting the class environment. Once the students had completed the bell work, the teacher signified she was ready to begin by simply stating, "Okay, let's put that work away so we can continue with class." The teacher then began to tell the class that she had once wanted to be a famous rapper. This story, she knew, would captivate the class. The teacher had previously spoken to a colleague who is also a disc jockey on the weekends

and he made her a compact disc filled with popular music. The teacher took the disc and played it for the class while she did a rap that she had written about the cell theory. This particular teacher also wore a hat backwards to try and get into character for the class. In the rap, she discussed the parts of the cell and their individual functions. The instructional presentation was organized and engaging and all the students were focused and seemed to learn a great deal from the lesson. Students that usually don't seem alive in other classes were really captivated by the rap song. Just as she was finishing the rap song, some of the students became unruly, loud and disruptive. Two students in particular jumped up and began giving each other high-fives and trying to do what is called a "beat box," in which noises are made with their mouths to create a beat. The teacher, through the use of rap, seemed to have helped find a way to connect and communicate the parts of a cell to the students. The two students, who could not control themselves during the rap, just seemed to let themselves get away.

The actions, dress, responses, and overall mannerisms of the students in this science class remarkably resembled the types of messages and scenes heard and observed through the media sources today. The children see this behavior, the playing, screaming, partying, and use of obscenities, as being acceptable. With these visions in their mind and their apparent lack of concern, they attempt to duplicate these same actions and more often than not, this occurs at school.

School is the place where American students come to socialize and visit with their friends that they may not see on the weekends or weeknights. In order to 'fit in' or be the popular person, they emulate what they see on television and in music videos. To them, these are the people that have 'made it' and by all appearances it seems they did that by

acting 'cool.' It appears these artists made it big without having to sacrifice anything and they have easy lives. The role models these students are choosing are ones that have been chosen throughout time, singing artists. The only problem is the popular artists now don't think about the responsibility of such a feat.

It was interesting to actually look at the middle school students and find out what they thought about the influential and very popular entertainment industry. It seems that the students are very motivated by what they see and hear and they put a lot of value in what other people say and think. The teen years are tough enough with just growing up and trying to find your identity without having to filter all of the music, videos, movies and games. Their minds are very impressionable and the entertainment industry needs to take some responsibility for the diminishing morals of our youth.

INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

The groups of students randomly picked to be interviewed were asked to attend an informal discussion of their interests like music, movies and video games. They were selected based on information from the student's behavioral folders, D-Trak, and NCWise. The discussion was conducted during their twenty minute break after lunch. Each student was eager to talk about how they pass their free time. This was an interesting topic and a chance for them to express their views. They appeared to be very open and honest during the informal interview process. Most of the students wore baggy clothing and attempted to create an appearance of a "cool" kid. Their demeanor was one of a student that knew what was in and knew how to impress peers. They were more than confident and came across as being very smug.

Do you like rap music?

Student B:

"Um, yea, rap music gets me fired up. I like the beats and the dancing. I listen to it all the time. I think rap music is the best music out there. The other types of music are too slow or they don't inspire me to do things."

Student C:

"Well, yea, rap is ok. I get down more with some of the harder stuff though. I guess what you call 'gangsta' rap. I think those guys that do it are tough. They don't care what other people think and I like that."

Student D:

"Yes. Rap is good. Me and my friends listen to it on the bus, at home, wherever we go. My favorite rap artist is Eminem. Rap songs just make you feel like you can do whatever you want. I really like the beat of the music."

Student B had numerous referrals during the past year ranging from disruptive behavior in class to fighting. In their responses, student B states that rap is one of his/her favorite types of music. Student C and D also agreed that rap was enjoyable although neither of them have any referrals in the past year.

How do rap music and videos make you feel?
Student B:

"I feel like I can do whatever I want. The people in the videos seem to have it all. They don't have any fears and are always be having a good time. When I listen to rap I get fired up and I want to go out and be a rap artist. All the ladies really like the rap guys. I could totally be a rap artist. I think I would be the greatest. I would have money and cars and whatever I wanted."

Student E:

"It makes me feel like jumping up and down and dancing. I can't dance very well but when I listen to rap it doesn't matter. The beat is easy and you can just move with it and enjoy the sound."

Student F:

"I don't really like to listen to it because the bass is too loud and it gives me a headache. Nothing they say makes sense to me."

Students B and E have similar backgrounds and enjoy rap music. They have positive effects from listening to the music and watching the videos. Student E has several referrals for disruptive behavior. Student F has does not enjoy listening or watching rap videos although he has a similar background. Student F has numerous referrals although he doesn't enjoy listening or watching rap videos.

Do you watch television, play video games, or listen to music with family and/or friends?

Student A:

"Yea, my parents are real cool. My Dad plays video games with me all the time. He loves to win. Dad has all of the new music and thinks he is the coolest. We ride around in his car and listen to the music really loud. It gets on my Mom's nerves sometimes but she likes it too. They don't care what I'm watching on TV. I stay up late and watch television and they don't care."

Student B:

"No, I don't watch or listen with my parents. My mom works a lot and my Dad isn't around. I do listen to music all the time with my friends though. We hang out and watch videos whenever we can. My Mom is always at work so they mostly come over to my house. We usually do whatever we want."

Student D:

"I live with my grandma and she's always sleeping. I don't have anyone around the house that hangs out with me. My grandma always wants me to be quiet."

What do find appealing about the rap music, videos or video games?

Student B:

"In those songs or in the videos there is always a party going on. Those guys have all the girls they want. It looks like so much fun. I wish all I had to do was get up, eat, invite friends over and party. That's all they do. They don't have any responsibilities and they get whatever they want. Money is everything. It looks like a lot of fun. Not like my life with school and everything."

Student D:

"I like the bling-bling and the fast cars. All of their cars and houses on MTV cribs are crazy. They have systems in their cars that blow everyone out. They have the biggest

houses and stuff they don't even know what to do with. It's funny to see random people hanging out in their houses all of the time. They have way too much money."

Student C:

"I like how they all hang with their boys and do everything together at the clubs and parties. They got each other's backs no matter what. In the video games they help each other out too."

Student E:

"I like all the blood and gore in the video games. That can't really happen in real life for the most part so it takes me to a fake world where there are no consequences. I can kill and do whatever I want."

Student F:

"I think they're stupid. It doesn't show how life really is for the average American. I don't know anyone that lives like that."

Student A:

"I like rap because my friends like it. We hang out and that's what we do when we're together. It gives me something to do with my friends."

Each of the students interviewed has numerous referrals for behavior except Students D and A. Based on the interviews and data collected, there doesn't seem to be a correlation between number of referrals and the variables among the students that might affect student behavior. In Table 2, percentages are representative of the number of students that have been exposed to violent media or questionable role models and their number of referrals. The Table is based on fifteen students interviewed and represents the student body of Fairlawn Middle School.

The interviews conducted showed some interesting similarities among students of all races, with high and low amounts of discipline referrals. Some of the similarities found in the collection of data included that all students could repeat just about word for word at least one rap song, the trust topic came up repeatedly when students spoke of friendship, rap music and music videos was the overwhelming choice of most of the students as their music preference, and that most of the students cited money, cars, jewelry, clothing, and partying as the main things that attract them to the need to emulate people in the media. On two occasions, students pumped their fists in the air as they recited certain parts of a rap song. In one instance, a student exhibited a gang sign representational of "West Side," a gang area in California and a gang sign that can be seen on numerous music videos. This same student has been given numerous referrals for violent behavior, bringing compact disc players to school which contained inappropriate music, and also for singing and rapping in the classroom, thus disrupting the learning environment. When asked how the music makes the student feel, their feelings varied from being "fired up" to feeling of being "cool." All of the students interviewed stated that they frequently watch music videos and the majority of students stated their favorite type of music video was rap. The lifestyles portrayed in the videos constantly came up in the conversations. When asked, male students were attracted by cars, money and women in the rap videos and females were equally attracted to clothes, jewelry, money and cars. At times, students agreed with their peers regarding their song choice. There was also a wide array of lines the students liked and could recite. Clearly, many of the lines contained some inappropriate language due to the way the students would stop, skip, or censor them when reciting. All of the students said they had been exposed to rap music

all of their lives. A popular student would be defined as cool, good, or tough. Classroom disruptions accounted for approximately eighty-seven percent of the students' conduct referrals. These disruptions ranged from talking out in class, to being disrespectful to the teacher, to disrupting the overall learning environment. The students were very open and seemed to appreciate the chance to talk about a topic that was such a big part of their lives. And in some instances sounded proud of their behavior because, in turn, that is what made them stand out to their peers and seem "cool," even without having exhibited any violence.

The questionnaires contained the same questions used in the interviews. The questionnaires were given out to thirty students randomly. I chose to question ten students from each grade level. Within the grade level, I randomly chose students in the regular classes as well as the SAGE classes. SAGE, at Fairlawn Middle School and in the Coastal Plains district, stands for Soaring Above Great Education and is an academically higher level class. Twenty seven of the thirty questionnaires were returned completed. The number of discipline referrals for each student varied from none to six received during the past four months. The answers were consistent with those given in the face to face interviews. Again, students were eager to have their opinions and views heard and offered up many answers that gave great insight into how they view the media and entertainment industry, and how it affects their lives. The answers given by students have been generalized and are stated below. These answers represent all student responses.

1. What types of music do you listen to?

Most of the students said 'hip-hop' or rap. There were two students that said they liked to listen to Country music.

2. What is your favorite type of music? Movie?

Here the reply was the same in response to the music question, the students said they enjoyed 'hip-hop' the most and two students mentioned Country music. When asked what their favorite type of movie was, the students all agreed that comedy and horror films were their favorite. Examples include "Halloween" and "Big Momma's House."

3. Do you like rap music?

There were only two students that didn't like rap music, their preference was Country music. Most students were Caucasian.

4. How does that music make you feel when you listen to it?

The students that preferred rap music said they felt great when they listened to it. Some of the responses included the feeling of power and aggressiveness. One student said that he just liked the beat of the music.

5. Do you like rap/gangsta rap?

Most of the students said they did, in deed, enjoy 'gangsta' rap.

6. If so how does that particular type of music make you feel?

'Gangsta' rap made the students feel like they could accomplish anything. They said that if the 'gangsta' rappers could grow up in the ghetto and make it, anyone could.

7. Do you watch music videos or play video games?

The students unanimously answered 'yes' to this question. Each of the students did watch music videos and play video games at least once a week.

8. What is your favorite type of music video?

This question was related to question number 1, the students enjoyed 'hip-hop' the most and Country music was a distant second.

9. What do you like about that type of video?

Only the students that stated they enjoyed 'hip-hop' answered this particular question. They said they enjoyed the "bling-bling" in the videos and the way the rappers and people in the video dressed. Those videos show you just what you could end up with (financially speaking) if you become famous.

10. What is your favorite song?

Below are some of the titles mentioned in response to this question. The majority of the titles sounded harmless but could have different meanings depending on the theme of the song.

Candy Shop, 50 Cent

Gold Digger, Kanye West

Run It, Chris Brown

My Humps, The Black-Eyed Peas

Soul Survivor, Young Jeezey

We Be Burning, Sean Paul

I'm Sprung, T-Pain

Sugar, We're Going Down, Fall Out Boys

Laffy Taffy, D4L

Girl Tonight, Twista

11. What words or lines do you remember? Can you recite them?

Each of the students knew specific lines from their favorite songs and was eager to recite them. Naturally they chose lines that did not include profanities or questionable matter.

12. What words or lines do you like? Please recite those.

The lines the students recited were about gaining wealth, achieving success, and acquiring a girl/boyfriend.

13. Who are your friends?

Most of the students replied to this question with qualities, not specific names. They stated that their friends were people that 'watched their back' and most of their close friends were people in their classes.

14. What groups in school do you hang out with?

One students responded, "The cool kids" and everyone else unanimously agreed.

15. What do you and your friends do for fun?

Each of the students agreed that hanging out was the activity they did most. They enjoyed going to the mall or surfing the internet.

16. Do you listen to music together?

The students said they loved hanging out and listening to music with their friends.

17. Do you watch music videos together?

The students all agreed that, yes, they did watch music videos together and it was something they very much enjoyed doing.

18. What sort of feelings do you get when you are around your friends?

Some of the students said they felt safe with their friends and most said they felt like they could be their true selves.

19. What do you get from hanging out with that group?

The undisputed answer was acceptance.

20. What do you contribute to the group?

The students replied to this question in relation to the previous question. They stated that they accepted their friends for who they are and their friends trust them.

21. How long have you been exposed to rap music/videos?

Nearly everyone said they had been listening to rap music and watching the videos for many years. In fact, they don't ever remember not watching them.

22. What are most of your discipline referrals for?

Generally, the reason for referrals was disruptive behavior. One of the students was written up for fighting the previous week.

23. Can you remember what was going through your mind when the last incident occurred?

The majority of the students said they were bored when the incident occurred.

24. Give me your definition of a good person? A 'cool' person? A 'tough' person?

A good person is someone that does all the right things and helps people out. A cool person is someone that everyone likes and wears all the right clothes. A tough person is mean and makes people think that they are great fighters.

25. What is your definition of kindness?

Kindess: wanting to do things for people all of the time.

26. How do you define violence?

Violence: hurting people

27. Define what a friend means to you.

Friends are there for you when you need them. They hang out with you and keep

you company. They also like the same things as you and agree with you all of the time.
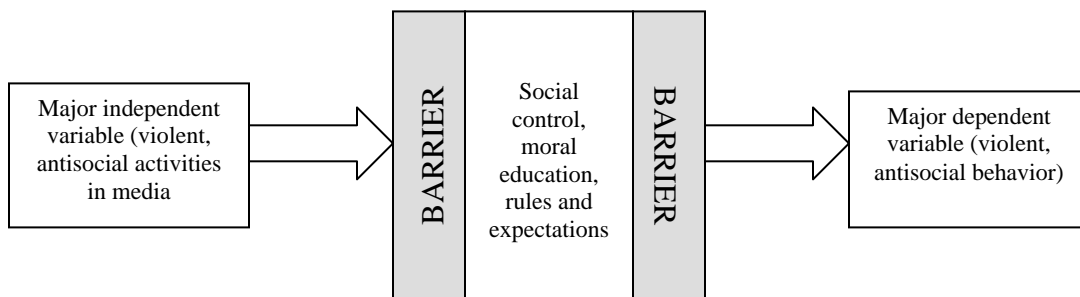
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After evaluating all of the interviews, observations, and literature, it seems that the media does have an influence on middle school children, especially when it's combined with the effects of greater or lesser parental control. The relation seems to be one of emulation of lifestyles and the admiration of their way of life, e.g. money, cars, and lavishness. The clothing and mannerisms of students mimic those seen on television by professional athletes and music video personalities. The interviews and observations revealed similarities in answers among students of all races and socioeconomic standing regardless of their number of discipline referrals. All of the students interviewed could recite words from various rap songs and often edited themselves due to the graphic nature of the words. Money, clothing, and cars overwhelmingly came up as the main attraction to certain types of media, especially videos and professional athletes. Rap music and videos were the most preferred media. Perhaps one of the most consistent and surprising answers among all of the students was that "trust" repeatedly came up when asked about friendship.

Previous studies show that media does have an effect on deviant behavior in relation to older high school students and young adults. Some students, while singing, watching, or listening to music, exhibit behaviors that are animated. The answers to the interview questions do not show a noticeable difference among those students with multiple referrals and those with little or no discipline referrals. Some answers dealt with internet accessibility and questionable content which could be further researched as a possible variable.

The correlation between television violence and violent or aggressive behaviors in real life is now demonstrated. Arguments about the direction of effect miss the point; it probably operates in both directions. It operates in an upward reinforcing spiral including poor initial parental control and/or family violence, high exposure to television violence, selection of violent role-models, increasing levels of violent experiences and violent practices. The school, as an organization, plays a key role in inhibiting the more severe forms of anti-social behavior found in the music and entertainment industry. The school socializes the student against anti-social behavior by enforcing school rules and indirectly instilling morals and values. Rules of behavior and expectations are taught in the early years of a student's school life. Teachers demand respect and in turn, show respect to their students. Unlike the rappers, the students are attending school, following rules for the most part, and respecting teachers and administration. There is 'zero tolerance' for violence on school grounds and this is a stark difference from the apathy towards violence that is portrayed in movies, lyrics, and videos. Students may act differently when they're off school grounds but while they are in school, they are expected to follow the rules. This seems to counter the message portrayed in rap songs, videos and movies, so that it's effects are limited to clothes, certain phrases, certain unrealistic attitudes, and posturing/attitudes. The fact that students were reluctant to say certain lyrics and were concerned about my reactions during interviews and observations was evidence of the student's knowledge of expectations during school.

Diagram depicting barriers:

| Major independent variable (violent, antisocial activities in media | → | BARRIER | Social control, moral education, rules and expectations | BARRIER | → | Major dependent variable (violent, antisocial behavior) |

Even though much of the research did not specifically deal with middle school aged children, one can interpret that the media has a tremendous influence on student behaviors based on the amount of time children spend listening to music, playing video games or watching television/movies. Since there is truly no way of limiting their exposure to these mediums, we must find ways to understand and maintain the presence of the intervening variables such as the adults, parents, and guardians with middle school aged children. This thesis looked at the possibility of the effect of media on deviant behavior in the middle school aged student and thus presents a foundation for continued research. For example, is there a connection between exposure to anti-social media and the quality of thinking and empathy? Once again the main factor or combination of factors that may contribute to the deviant behavior and occurrence of multiple discipline referrals in middle school aged children is the strength of the support unit. The presence of a strong family unit and values usually provides the necessary foundation for our children to make sound decisions about their lives. A variety of media violence is present in the homes of adolescents, with considerable variation in the degree of parental supervision. Regardless of government and other interested groups' attempts to limit the amount of violence reaching American families, families themselves play a critical role in guiding what reaches their children. Whether by adopting V-chip technology for home television programming, using Internet violence screening, or simply by monitoring closely their child's use of televisions, computers, and video games, parents can limit and shape their children's selection of and responses to media violence.

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