

## This week's issue:

# DOES RAP MUSIC HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUTH?



Some people believe that rap music has had **considerable** influence on children and teenagers, most of which has been negative. They claim that the lyrics are often too violent and especially insulting to women. Thus, they say, rap has **contributed** to aggression among young people and to behavior that disrespects women.

But is that a **valid** claim? Supporters of rap music say the songs **demonstrate** a different face of American culture than the one we usually see on television or in newspapers. They think it's important for rappers' voices to be heard. Many people argue that violent individuals who listen to rap were probably violent before ever hearing this type of music. Thus we can't blame rap for their aggressive actions. Still others say that rap is a form of creative expression – this generation's poetry. They point to rap artists who create positive images for today's youth.

However, some parents are worried about the messages conveyed by rap and other explicit music. One group, the Parents Music Resource Center, asked the music industry to label explicit songs and albums with a warning. Many music fans consider this a form of artistic censorship that has no place in a free society.

Do you think that listening to rap leads to aggression? Should we have rules to prevent rap artists from talking about violence, especially violence against women? What would be **sufficient** evidence, in your view, to support the claim that rap has a negative impact on youth?

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considerable | contribute | demonstrate | sufficient | valid

## USE THE FOCUS WORDS

**considerable** (*adjective*) large; important

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Practicing my violin each night had a **considerable** effect on how well I played in the spring concert.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Think of an activity you could do for thirty minutes a day to make a **considerable** difference in your health.

**contribute** (*verb*) to add to

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Our class raised \$300 and gave it to the Red Cross to **contribute** to the relief efforts in Haiti after the earthquake.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How can each member of a community **contribute** to keeping it clean?

**demonstrate** (*verb*) to show; to display

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Raphael **demonstrated** how responsible he was by cleaning his room, doing all of his homework, and taking out the trash.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Name some ways animals **demonstrate** that they feel threatened.

**sufficient** (*adjective*) enough; adequate

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Ms. El-Amin told Jalisa that she had done **sufficient** revising and could begin the final draft of her essay.

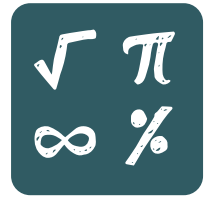
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Does your school offer a **sufficient** range of extracurricular activities? Explain.

**valid** (*adjective*) defensible; true

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Mr. Jones said that “having a bad hair day” was not a **valid** excuse for Kevin to wear his hat in class.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Can you think of a **valid** reason for the U.S. to go to war with another country?

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## DO THE MATH

Does rap music **contribute** to violence? A **considerable** number of rap songs talk about hurting and killing people, especially women. However, this is not **sufficient** evidence that rap itself is dangerous. Researchers have tried to **demonstrate** connections between rap music and aggressive behavior in many different studies. They try to establish **valid** conclusions by keeping many possibilities in mind. For example, even if rap listeners exhibit violent behavior, the music itself may not be the cause.

One study compared two groups: students who watched rap music videos for 14 or more hours each week, and students who rarely or never watched them. The students who watched the videos for at least 14 hours each week showed the following characteristics, as compared to the other group of students:

- ▶ They were 3 times more likely to hit a teacher.
- ▶ They were over 2.5 times more likely to get arrested.

**Option 1:** Based on the information above, is the following conclusion **valid** or invalid?


Students who watched 14 or more hours of rap music videos each week were more likely to hit a teacher than to get arrested.

- A. The conclusion is **valid**.
- B. The conclusion is invalid.

**Option 2:** Manny watches 7 hours of rap music videos each week. Based on the information above, is the following conclusion **valid** or invalid?

Manny is 1.5 times more likely to hit a teacher than a student who rarely or never watches rap music videos.

- A. The conclusion is **valid**.
- B. The conclusion is invalid.

 **Discussion Question:** What if researchers could **demonstrate** a **valid** cause-and-effect relationship between rap music and violent behavior? For example, what if researchers could show that nonviolent teens became violent after listening to rap? Would this be a **sufficient** reason for us to ban certain songs or artists? The Constitution gives **considerable** protection to free speech. However, not all speech is protected. Words that endanger others (such as, in one famous example, yelling “Fire!” in a crowded theater) can be banned. What can you **contribute** to this debate? Where should we draw the line between free speech and public safety?

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## THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

“I heard that our principal, Ms. Jackson, is considering banning all rap music at school,” said Anthony.

“Why on Earth would she do that?” asked Haley. “It makes no sense, and it’s not fair. I like having rap songs played over the loudspeakers before my basketball games. It helps me get pumped up.”

“Ms. Jackson thinks listening to rap **contributes** to school violence,” said Anthony.

“Does she have any evidence to **demonstrate** that’s true?” asked Jamal.

“She checked the playlists of all the kids who got into fights last semester,” said Anthony, “and she found that 85 percent of them had rap music. She figures that is **sufficient** evidence against rap, and that banning rap will lead to less fighting.”


Haley frowned. “That’s not a **valid** conclusion,” she said. “I bet 85 percent of kids who got into fights wore pants, too, but that’s not a reason to ban pants!”

Ms. Kahn laughed. “That’s an interesting way of making your point, Haley,” she said. “It sounds like you doubt that the correlation she used was **sufficient** evidence to show causation. Maybe you should do some research and see if you can come up with some useful data for Ms. Jackson to consider.”

Haley, Jamal, and Anthony spent a week conducting surveys among their classmates.

 Come up with data that they could use to **demonstrate** that rap music **contributes** to school violence.

 Come up with data that they could use to **demonstrate** that rap music does not **contribute** to school violence.

 Suppose that Haley, Jamal, and Anthony find that students who fight in school listen to significantly more rap music than students who do not fight in school. Is this **sufficient** evidence to prove that rap music **contributes** to violence? Is it possible that there are other factors at play? Explain your thinking.



