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Heroes or Villains: Modern Rappers and their Effect on Young Adult Males

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Heroes or Villains: Modern Rappers and their Effect on Young Adult Males

By

Jared McCabe

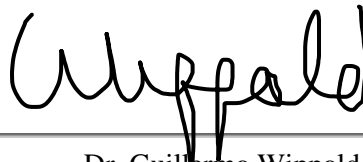
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of modern-day rappers and how they affect the growing mental health crisis for young adult males. Recently, an “emo-rap” genre has emerged where vulnerability is common, and rappers share both their mental health struggles and experiences with drug use. The degree to which these artists have influenced their listeners is unclear, and perceptions of them are polarized. There are some who view them as villains who sponsor violence and drug use and others who view them as heroes who break down societal barriers and build supportive networks among their listeners.

Based on the existing scientific literature surrounding mental health, research on the impacts of rap music, analyses of cases in popular media, and a study conducted on a representative sample of young adult males, this study argues for a holistic look on these artists and provides recommendations for how these rappers could improve their influence on their listeners and the general public.

INTRODUCTION

After the death of popular rapper Juice WRLD in 2019, a significant issue was highlighted: mental health is a growing problem for young adult males, and it is reflected in the music industry. Juice WRLD's death followed those of similar hip-hop artists, Mac Miller and Lil Peep, and all three died from drug overdoses. Even though these deaths had no correlation with each other, together they paint an overarching picture of what is occurring for much of the young adult population. Mental health concerns are on the rise as "the suicide rate for people aged 15 to 24 years in the US in 2017 [has] reached its highest point since 1960" (Kresovich, et al., 2020). These trends are worrisome, and they largely affect young adult males (Lynch, et al., 2018).

The music of Juice WRLD and these other rappers include frequent mentions of heartbreak, trauma, and drug use, and this style was largely uncommon before the emergence of the emo-rap genre. Throughout the 2000s and early 2010s, the emo-rock genre and rap were mostly separate when looking at groups such as Linkin Park and My Chemical Romance in the former genre and Kanye West and Lil Wayne in the latter (Palattella, 2020). However, after some time, these genres started to mesh, and a new style of rap emerged that substituted melancholy in the typical place of aggression. Even though this occurred, it is important to note that the emo-rock genre and other styles of rap did not fade out, but artists like Juice WRLD, Lil Peep, and Mac Miller all tended to incorporate this new emo-rap style into their music.

When thinking about the development of this music, it is crucial to consider the origins of hip-hop as a whole. The term "hip-hop" was first made famous by emcee Love Bug Starski in the 1970s, and DJ Kool Herc is widely regarded as its founder (Young, 2014). The culture of hip-hop, which encompasses the music genre of rap, has its roots in gangs, violence, and parties,

but there were other factors influencing its creation. To some, the lifestyle was “actually a combination of rites of passage, cultural activism, art, discipline, ethical standards, collective consciousness, personal enlightenment, and community connectivity” (Young, 2014). However, common misconceptions emerged as this culture grew out of urban life, and as it was largely misrepresented by mainstream media. This is primarily why hip-hop and rap music are so controversial in today’s world because they can be looked at through two different angles.

Even though hip-hop culture includes break dancing, deejaying, and graffiti painting, the most prolific part of it is rap music. The first songs in this genre were largely a response to the “poverty, urban renewal, deindustrialization, and inner-city violence” that many African Americans experienced in the late 70s and 80s in the United States. Eventually, they incorporated this perspective into their own unique culture which became to be known as hip-hop (McCoy, 2017). MCs or Masters of Ceremony would control a crowd by reeling off lyrics over a beat, and this grew into rappers recording tracks and releasing them to the mainstream listener.

One early popular artist was Grandmaster Flash who not only cemented the genre but influenced his listeners as well. In his song with The Furious Five “The Message,” the group attempted to express a socially conscious message. In other words, the artists wanted to show how aware they were of the current times and relay that to their listeners to build rapport. In this case, “The Message” was to reflect the animosity that was building for many inner-city residents (McCoy, 2017). The chorus of the song “It’s like a jungle sometimes / It makes me wonder how I keep from going under” details how the odds were stacked against these individuals living in urban areas (Genius, The Message). Grandmaster Flash wanted to bring together those who had these feelings and justify them. This is not to say that there were not mentions of misogyny,

aggression, and drugs in this early rap music, but that was not the full extent of what these artists could focus on. The rappers could be clever with their lyrics and articulate their point of views to those that understood their situation and even those that did not.

This controversy is much of the same when it comes to Juice WRLD and other current rappers due to their promotion of drug use and violence. However, like Grandmaster Flash, they have been commended for trying to express a message. They allude to harmful topics like these early rappers, but they frequently describe their emotions and the conditions in which they live to reflect their mental health struggles. This is important because these rappers are celebrities and viewed as people of influence in our culture, so what they say and do is important for not only their fans but also those that are unfamiliar with them.

With this in mind, the fact that these artists have an impact on the younger generation can be concerning. Some would say that frequent mentions of drug use, mistreatment of women, and violence can destigmatize these topics for young adults, mainly males, and henceforth can influence their behavior. However, this has not been explored in great detail because it falls into the category of nature vs. nurture. Would a listener of this music try drugs without ever hearing it before? Would an individual commit an aggressive act without being familiarized about it in a song? These are the questions this thesis looks to explore because the true impact of this music is still unclear. Of course, there's no way to fully decipher this because this has been debated for years with movies, TV shows, and video games, but some light can be shown on the topic for these rap artists.

Due to the confusion in this narrative between the potential harm that these rappers bring but the critical insights that they share, this thesis was created to put the pieces together. The way it is organized is first by diving into the more scientific literature on mental health and drug use,

more specifically on how it relates to young adult males, and then taking a look at rap's connection to mental health. Next, Juice WLRD's music is examined and compared for its pros and cons, and relevant case studies are analyzed such as the famous Judas Priest incident. Then, a study is presented based on young adult males' opinions of drug use and how rap music affects these views. Finally, some conclusions are offered for how these artists should be viewed in society based on the compiled data and information.

DRUG USE AND MENTAL HEALTH

To begin, drug use and mental health play a substantial role for these rappers when it comes to influencing their listeners. Due to these topics being commonly connected in this music, it could have an effect on the fans. Luckily, many studies have been conducted to show the correlation between mental health and drug use. One study published by Oxford University Press in 1979 looked at this relationship and observed a representative sample of young adults aged between 18 and 29. Despite this study being over 40 years old, there still remains merit to its research and findings. The purpose of this study was to determine the actual effects of drugs on mental health and the genuine reasons for substance abuse rather than just implying causation of drug use to poor mental health. After conducting several interviews, the examiners arrived at the conclusion of "drug use reflects an attempt to cope with psychological difficulties" (Grove, et al. 1979). This is saying that drug use is the result of poor mental health rather than the other way around, and researchers found this correlation over the common belief at the time that drug use led to poor mental health. Of course, this does not mean that there is no causation of drug use to mental health struggles, but this was the predominant finding of the study.

It is crucial to note that mental health struggles are not the only reason to use drugs. One study out of King's College London aimed to observe the reasons why young adults use drugs, and they accomplished this by interviewing 364 individuals who had used multiple substances throughout their lives. In doing so, they found the most popular reasons for using drugs were “to relax (96.7%), become intoxicated (96.4%), keep awake at night while socializing (95.9%), enhance an activity (88.5%) and alleviate a depressed mood (86.8%)” (Boys, et al., 2001). Only two of these reasons, to relax and alleviate a depressed mood, could fall into the mental health category, so this is clearly not the only force leading to drug use. It cannot be ignored that drugs have the ability to make experiences more enjoyable which is an idea that is heavily propagated in rap music. For some time, rappers have been known to advocate their drugs of choice to fans so that they themselves can have a good time or even gain status among their friends. This is undeniably a strong critique against these rappers' music, and it needs to be considered when evaluating their role for young adult males.

The last part of this relationship between mental health and drug use is that barriers are in the way for young adult males to seek help. When affected with mental issues, males are typically more resistant to look to others for help. One 2018 journal from the *American Journal of Men's Health* looked to define these barriers and determine solutions for guiding males to open up about their problems. After conducting focus groups and interviews with a sample of 17 males aged 18 to 24, researchers found seven key barriers: “acceptance from peers, personal challenges, cultural and environmental influences, self-medicating with alcohol, perspectives around seeking professional help, fear of homophobic responses, and traditional masculine ideals” (Lynch, et al. 2018). All or just some of these barriers could be present for any given male, but they make it difficult to approach a professional or even friends with serious issues.

Much of this is due to a male's place in society, and even though traditional masculine ideals are labeled as a singular category in this study, it is the main problem because it affects acceptance from peers, homophobic responses, and some of the other listed barriers. As for solutions, this study offers five that center around increasing mental health awareness and "making a new meaning" of mental health, both of which can be achieved through the music of rap artists (Lynch, et al. 2018)

After looking at these studies about drugs and mental health, the two are clearly related in this problem for young adult males. The question is: how do these new rappers influence this? Young adult males feel difficulty seeking help for their mental health struggles which can lead them to turn to drugs. They could have been influenced by this music, but it is difficult to know for certain. It could also be a case where these artists enhance the problem rather than causing it. Overall, the effects and degree of influence are hard to determine, and this is why its important to look at the connection between rap music and mental health.

RAP MUSIC AND MENTAL HEALTH

Topics surrounding mental health have become more frequently referenced in rap songs because of the emergence of the emo-rap genre and the increasing prevalence of depression, anxiety, and other mental health illnesses. One research study from JAMA Pediatrics used 2 coders to look at the most popular 125 rap songs across the years and their references to "anxiety, depression, suicide, metaphors suggesting mental health struggles, and stressors associated with mental health risk" (Kresovich, et al. 2020). After data analysis, they found that these topics have significantly increased in rap songs from 1998 to 2018, and mental health as a whole has become a much greater topic of interest. However, researchers noted that further

studies would have to be conducted to determine the positive or negative effects of this trend. Again, the problem arises of what role do these artists have for young adult males: are they heroes or villains?

The book *Therapeutic Uses of Rap and Hip Hop* looks to redefine the common conception of rap music and its artists. Typically, hip hop is “wholly branded as violent, drug promoting, misogynistic, or sexually offensive”, but this is not the way it should be looked at in its entirety (Rine, 2013). Rap music is an outlet for many individuals to express themselves and the culture they grew up in regardless of the controversy surrounding its content and messages. Whether artists’ words are frowned upon or referencing illegal activities, rappers are expressing a truth that cannot be viewed as fully detrimental or damaging to society when it is in fact their perspective. Much like what Grandmaster Flash did with his song “The Message,” even though it was not something some people wanted to hear, it was still beneficial to hear it. Not letting these individuals express themselves would be a crime in itself, and transparency would be lost about what is going on for many groups of people. All this considered, it is essential to view rap music and other similar works through multiple lenses, so that the full impact of it can be realized.

Another topic touched on in *Therapeutic Uses of Rap and Hip Hop* is that rap music can be therapeutic for individuals experiencing mental struggles. In the book, the authors, Hadley and Yancy, define 4 ways that this can be achieved: “listening (reflecting through shared experiences), performing (taking ownership of one’s story), creating (empowering through communication), and improvising (developing a sense of identity) (Rine, 2013). Music is not a one-dimensional piece of an individual’s life where he or she can only listen to and be influenced by an artist’s song. Listeners can reflect on certain similarities in their life and possibly create something themselves, but for the purposes of this research, the listening aspect is the most

important because it's how the fans interact with the artists and their messages. Moreover, a good deal of the listening and developed respect for these artists is built because of shared experiences, so it is more likely this music enforces already present behaviors than creates new ones. Where this comes into play is that it could lead listeners to a decision they were already considering, such as trying drugs, but it is unlikely to bring it up out of the blue. Nonetheless, according to this book, rap can be therapeutic for younger individuals if used in the right context.

JUICE WRLD'S MUSIC

When looking at these emo-rap artists' impact on society, it is necessary to look deeper into their lyrics and messages in order to further understand the scope of their work. One artist in particular, Juice WRLD, is a great candidate for evaluation because he shows both the best and worst of the genre as a whole. He is willing to connect with his listeners through exposing his deep emotions, but he does not always reflect on the effects of his work. In other words, Juice WRLD "pour[s] out his anxieties, fears, and insecurities in harrowing detail, painting pictures of depression—low-energy, isolating, destructive depression—with unblinking candor" (Younger, 2019). However, he has also been known to "not only reduce women to objects of desire and scorn, but into targets for vitriol with a violent edge" (Kelly, 2018). This duality of Juice WRLD's music in these critiques is what makes it difficult to judge his impact, so by going through some of his lyrics, it will help give a clearer representation. Two songs will be examined, one on the negative side and one on the positive: "Lean Wit Me" and "Wishing Well."

“Lean Wit Me”

As one of Juice WLRD’s first popular songs, released in 2018, “Lean Wit Me” delves into his struggle with drugs. However, he portrays drugs in a positive way (Genius, Lean wit Me). The song goes as follows:

Drugs got me sweatin', but the room gettin' colder
Lookin' at the devil and the angel on my shoulder
Will I die tonight? I don't know, is it over?
Lookin' for my next high, I'm lookin' for closure

These opening lines show the negative effects of his experience with drugs as his feelings and decision-making are distorted. He is also concerned for his life and is only thinking about the next high. He proceeds as:

Lean with me, pop with me
Get high with me if you rock with me
Smoke with me, drink with me
(Expletive) up liver with some bad kidneys

This chorus is where some would say Juice WRLD and other artists go too far with their music. In these lines, Juice WRLD is directly encouraging drug use by saying “do this with me.” This is dangerous for younger listeners because they may not fully understand the effects of these substances, and they could think they are more acceptable to use after hearing this song. It is one

thing to talk about your own struggles, but to promote it directly can be negative for certain audiences.

The rest of the song keeps the similar themes and messages with lines such as “Girl, you hate it when I'm too high / But that's where I belong, where I belong” (Genius, Lean wit Me). Lines such as these explain his story, which is essential for an artist, but once they reach levels of advocacy instead of reflection, they can become harmful for listeners. Overall, “Lean Wit Me” is a more negative example of Juice WRLD’s work because of the borderline endorsement of drug use.

“Wishing Well”

“Wishing Well,” released after Juice WRLD’s death in 2020, became one of his signature works that spoke deeply about his mental health (Genius, Wishing Well). The song is much less rhythmic and energizing than “Lean Wit Me,” and it puts forth a more somber tone. In “Wishing Well” Juice WRLD sings:

I can't breathe, I'm waiting for the exhale
Toss my pain with my wishes in a wishing well
Still no luck, but oh well
I still try even though I know I'm gon' fail

This highlights Juice WRLD’s depression, anxiety, and lack of confidence all in one verse and goes directly against the typical theme in rap music of being overly confident and flaunting materialistic things like money and fame. In these lines, Juice WRLD is being authentic by

expressing how he actually feels instead of just following the normal trends of the industry. Not only is this unique when compared to most rap songs, but the content is more difficult to share being that it involves deep, intimate feelings. This is one of the reasons why Juice WLRD is commended by certain critics. He goes on to say:

This is the part where I tell you I'm fine, but I'm lying
I just don't want you to worry
This is the part where I take all my feelings and hide 'em
'Cause I don't want nobody to hurt me

Here, Juice WRLD touches on the difficulty of opening up about these feelings due to possible scrutiny from others and the thought of troubling them. As seen from the previous study, these reasons are similar to the ones that many young adult males face daily. As Juice WRLD reflects on these challenges, listeners can gain a sense of relief because someone with this level of success is suffering from the same issues they are.

One of Juice WLRD's final lines for "Wishing Well" is "I stopped taking the drugs and now the drugs take me" (Genius, Wishing Well). This shows the pitfall of drug use instead of promoting it, like he did in "Lean Wit Me," and it is much more of a call for help rather than a push to join him. All this considered, "Wishing Well" is be a more positive example of Juice WLRD's music and the effects it can have on listeners due to his honest reflection of emotions and his negative depiction of drug use.

After analyzing both of these songs, it can be confirmed that Juice WLRD brings both positive and negative ideas to his listeners. Just like other artists in the genre, he can bring a

sense of relatability and comfort by sharing his experiences, but he can also walk the line of sponsoring drug use. Overall, his music should not be viewed as one dimensional, and labels of right or wrong should be placed on a song-by-song or even lyric by lyric basis.

COMPARISON

Relating this music back to Grandmaster Flash's "The Message" can be a good measure of how Juice WRLD and others stack up against mindful lyrics aimed at societal change. As noted previously, "The Message" is a great example of the good that can be achieved with rap music, so Juice WRLD's songs will be compared to this high standard. The song is written as follows:

My son said, "Daddy, I don't wanna go to school"
'Cause the teacher's a jerk, he must think I'm a fool
And all the kids smoke reefer, I think it'd be cheaper
If I just got a job, learned to be a street sweeper

On the surface, this verse may seem like simply a child expressing his opinion to his parents (Genius, The Message). However, when thinking about the time period of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, the late 70s and 80s time period of urban development, this verse is more insightful than one would think.

The whole point of these lyrics is to show that the living circumstances for these poor individuals were dooming them from the start. The child does not want to go to school because the teacher is not giving him the attention and assistance that he needs, so he makes the clever

assumption that it would be more beneficial to not go to the school where he learns nothing. If he does this, he can start making money and help his family in the process, however, this will be at a low paying job where upward mobility will be difficult with no high school diploma. This is a predicament that many individuals found themselves in during this time and to some degree still find themselves in today. The verse also reflects the high level of drug use in urban areas around New York, where hip-hop originated.

“The Message” ends with a skit-like interaction where the group is unfairly targeted by police officers. The group of rappers is having a conversation, minding their own business, when a police officer arrives and starts yelling at them. After making it known that they are Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, the officer asks “Is that a gang? Come here.” This mistreatment was a reality for many groups during this era, and the unfairness still occurs today. With all these elements incorporated into one song, the socially conscious elements of “The Message” can be seen along with the positive potential of rap music.

As for how this compares with the work of Juice WRLD, there are a few things that stick out. For one, both works try to put forth messages to society. Even though “The Message” is more purposeful and the group further considers the effects of their music, Juice WRLD still puts mental health to the forefront of people’s minds when it would not necessarily be a topic of interest. Both songs stimulate thinking in their different eras, and they consider the unique present issues. The only difference is that songs like “Lean Wit Me” can bring about problematic thinking. In order to avoid this, rappers need to be more deliberate in how they write their songs because the effects can be detrimental to song individuals.

CASE STUDIES

There have been several instances where musical artists or groups have been criticized based on the behavior their music has incited, one of the most famous being the Judas Priest Case. On December 23rd, 1985, two young men from Nevada shot themselves, and their families brought a lawsuit against one of their favorite metal bands, Judas Priest (Taysom, 2020). This case arose on the basis of subliminal messages being present in Judas Priest's songs that allegedly led the two men to kill themselves. The families said phrases such as "let's be dead" and "do it" were part of Judas Priest's album *Stained Class*, which the two men were listening to on the tragic night (Taysom, 2020). It went so far as one of the victims even writing a letter that the music potentially influenced him to take his own life. In the end, this case was dismissed because even though there were subliminal messages in the music, there was nothing to say those messages convinced the already at-risk men to commit suicide. This is to say, these artists could not be blamed when the listeners were predisposed to certain behaviors.

This is one example of the harm that music can cause, but there also have been examples where artists have had a positive impact on the community. On October 4th, 2016, popular hip-hop artist Kid Cudi released on Facebook that he was dealing with depression and currently undergoing treatment (Francis, 2021). This sparked a huge supportive response from the Twitter community where the post received "165,000 likes and more than 40,000 shares within the first 12 hours" (Kid Cudi, 2016). It also led to the creation of the hashtag "YouGoodMan" which centered around this collective effort for fans to voice their own struggles as well as be there for Kid Cudi. This hashtag became a "permission slip for vulnerability in a world that hides depression under toxic expression of masculinity"(Nuckolls, 2016). Here Kid Cudi's openness broke down the barrier of traditional masculine ideals, and many individuals had a space to share

their experiences. Ultimately, this had a positive effect on the community, and even though it was not directly through his music, Kid Cudi still used his name and fame to help his fans.

Another positive example of rappers being heroes for their fans instead of villains is the release of Logic's song "1-800-273-8255" in 2017. The title of this song features the phone number for the suicide hotline in the United States. The goal of it was to grow the notoriety of the line and the good it can do for people in need. After the release, "the google searches for the 'Suicide Hotline' increased by 49%" (Torgerson, et al. 2021). Clearly the song accomplished its purpose and spread the word of this valuable asset. As for the lyrics of the song, Logic focuses on mental health themes with lines such as "And my life don't even matter, I know it, I know it / I know I'm hurting deep down, but can't show it" and "I want you to be alive, I want you to be alive / You don't gotta die today, you don't gotta die" (Genius, 1-800-273-8255). This song was a step in the right direction for hip-hop, and it played a part in bringing about the emo-rap genre. In summary, the release of this song and the focus of it were extremely positive for many people, and it showed the strides rap music can make in increasing the awareness of mental health.

Based on these case studies, music can greatly influence listeners and the community as a whole. The artists' purpose is important in creating their songs because their work is something that is valued and imitated in some cases. In the case of Judas Priest, it could have been negative for those individuals, but in the cases of Kid Cudi and Logic, it was beneficial in many ways. Also, the messages do not always have to be incorporated into the music itself as shown with Kid Cudi's Twitter post. What these artists address aside from their music is also important. Overall, music's influence is certain, but the degree of its impact and the individuals it affects is dependent on the goal of the artists.

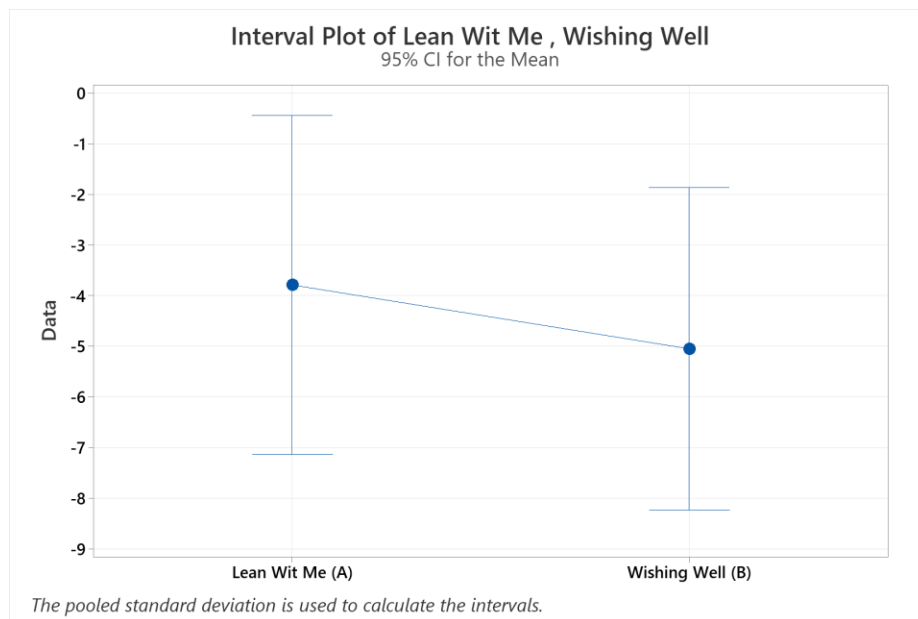
STUDY

For the purpose of this thesis, a study was conducted regarding young adult males and their opinions towards drugs. 40 men aged 18 to 25 received a survey and gave results based on whether they agreed or disagreed with statements surrounding drugs. Their options were on a linear scale sliding from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In creating the survey, questions were retrieved from *Investigating Attitudes toward Drug Use; Age and Gender* by Mica Howell, and they were manipulated slightly to meet the needs of this thesis. There were 12 questions in total and examples include: “Using illegal drugs can be a pleasant activity, Everyone who tries drugs eventually regrets it, and To experiment with drugs is to give away control of your life.” Before answering these questions, the respondents were shown a random video clip either featuring the song Lean Wit Me or Wishing Well: the discussed positive and negative works of Juice WRLD.

The goal of this study was to determine the impact these two songs had on respondents in terms of their view on drugs. The initial hypothesis was that there would be a significant difference between opinions when separated into the two songs. In turn, this would show an influence of the songs on the respondents. Lean Wit Me would show more positive attitudes towards drugs whereas Wishing Well would show more negative. To begin analyzing this data, questions showing favorability to drugs were given a positive value. An example of this kind of question would be “Using illegal drugs can be a pleasant activity.” Conversely, questions showing negativity towards drugs were assigned a negative value. One example of this would be “A young person should never try drugs.” Therefore, based on the linear scale, a strongly agree response for a positive question was given a +5. These values were then added up for each

respondent, and respondents were then assigned a rating of how positive or negative they answered the questions (See Exhibit A and B in the appendix).

In order to examine these results, these ratings were separated based on what song the young adult male listened to. The selection of the song was randomized, and 21 respondents listened to “Wishing Well” whereas 19 listened to “Lean Wit Me.” These respondents scores were then put through an ANOVA test of difference in means to determine if the responses were significantly different. Even though the sample size was larger than 30, the data was still put through an Anderson Darling Test, and both means proved to be normally distributed (see Exhibit C). As for the ANOVA test, the analysis provided a p-value of 0.584, which is extremely high, and not significant in terms of these songs having any correlation with the positive or negative views of drugs (see Exhibit D). Please see the graph below:



Some other observations to take from this graph are that “Wishing Well” did typically show lower ratings but nowhere close to being statistically significant. Keep in mind, no conclusions should

be drawn from these means being negative because there were seven negative questions and only five positive ones included in the survey, so this was likely a factor for the overall low scores. Finally, the range of values spanned from -20 to 10 showing vast differences among young adult males for their views on drugs. Ultimately, the main takeaway from this survey and its results is that this music has no immediate effect on young adult males in terms of their opinions on drug use. However, this does not mean that it could never have an impact.

Due to the length of this project, a study could not be conducted with prolonged exposure to this kind of music, but this would be essential to investigate in the future. If listening to it from a young age spurred any susceptibility to drug use when compared to those who did not, this could drastically further the development of this work. Of course this is how most would be influenced by music or any form of media, but these results are important because short term impacts are weak or non-existent. However, one thing to make note of is that out of the participants who listened to “Lean Wit Me,” 60 percent had heard the song many times before and 52.2 percent of those who listened to “Wishing Well” had similar familiarity. Therefore, these respondents could’ve shown less of an immediate change in their views because of past experience with the song. However, it is difficult to fully discern the influence of hearing these songs many times before answering the survey. Overall, this research would be furthered with a long-term study on emo-rap music, but the short-term impacts are less than expected.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to examine the trends for young adult males in terms of the growing mental health crisis and drug use and to observe the different ways rap music can have an impact. With the substantial degree of literature compiled and the analyses of Juice

WRLD's music and various case studies, it can be said that rap music and, more specifically the emo-rap genre, is a subject that should be looked at through many lenses. Rap music can be therapeutic and help alleviate the loneliness concerning certain feelings in the young adult male community, but it can also promote drug use and have a negative effect on those in certain situations. Therefore, like many things, these artists cannot wholeheartedly be labeled as heroes or villains because the context of lyrics, specific work, and the individual listening are all important factors.

Furthermore, even though these artists can do both good and bad, they should take greater ownership over how their music and even their actions will be perceived by listeners and others. In the case of "The Message," "Wishing Well," "1-800-273-8255," and Kid Cudi's Twitter post, they all had intentions of sharing emotions and difficult circumstances through the lens of vulnerability in order to let those know that they are not alone. As for "Lean Wit Me," it showed Juice WRLD's unique experience with drugs, but he pushed it too far with encouraging the use of substances. The artists need to consider their purposes and messages more cautiously if they want to be labeled as heroes instead of villains. This does not mean they can never mention violence, drugs, or unfavorable opinions, but they need to do it with the potential effects considered and give thought to their influence on their listeners.

Ultimately, these artists in the emo-rap genre and rap are polarizing figures and rightfully so. With the growing mental health crisis, their role for young adult males is even more important because rappers can increase awareness and shed light on the downsides of drug use. Juice WRLD was an example of this, and even though he had some questionable elements in his work, he made a sizeable contribution to the rap community and broke down toxic barriers for many of his listeners.

APPENDIX

Exhibit A – Survey Questions

1. Using illegal drugs can be a pleasant activity (+)
2. A young person should never try drugs (-)
3. There are few things more dangerous than experimenting with drugs (-)
4. Using drugs is fun (+)
5. Many things are much riskier than trying drugs (+)
6. Everyone who tries drugs eventually regret it (-)
7. The laws about illegal drugs should be made stronger (-)
8. Drug use is one of the biggest evils in the country (-)
9. Drugs help people to experience life in full (+)
10. Schools should teach about the real hazards of taking drugs (-)
11. The police should not be annoying young people who are trying drugs (+)
12. To experiment with drugs is to give away control of your life (-)

* (+) indicates a positive drug question whereas (-) indicates a negative drug question

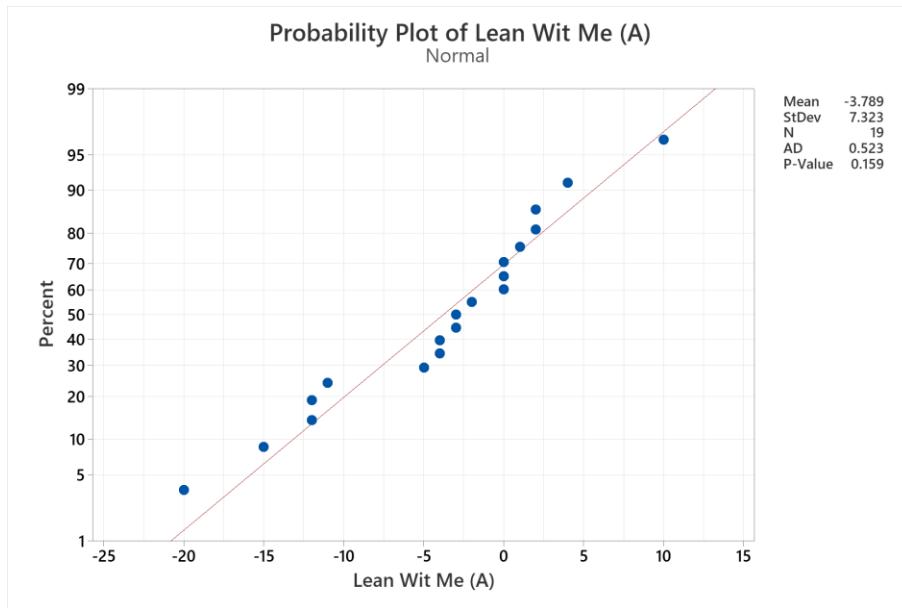
Exhibit B – Survey Results

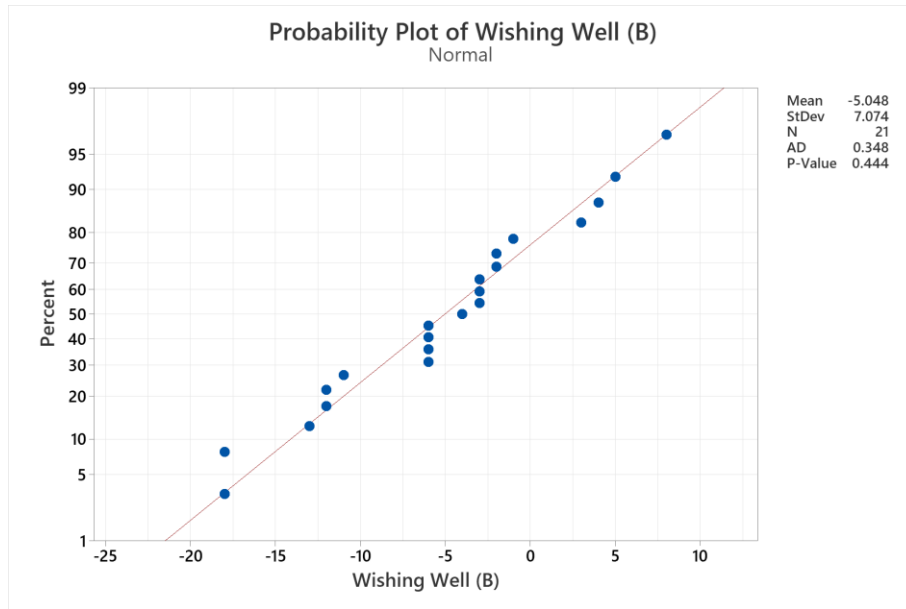
Age	Gender	Education Level	Race/ethnicity	Home State	Please select one randomly	Have you h	Have you h
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	South Carolina	B		A few times
22	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	B		Never
20	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	SC	A	Never	
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	A	A few times	
22	Male	Doctorate	Black or African American	Atlanta, Georgia	A	A few times	
25	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	Croatia	A	Never	
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	Texas	A	Many times	
19	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	NY	B		Many times
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	Pennsylvania	B		Never
20	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	South Carolina	B		A few times
21	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	Delaware	B		Never
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	B		A few times
20	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	SC	B		Many times
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	South Carolina	B		A few times
21	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	SC	A	Many times	
22	Male	Master's Degree	Black or African American	SC	A	Many times	
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	Black or African American	south carolina	A	Many times	
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	NJ	B		Many times
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	South Carolina	B		Many times
22	Male	High school degree or equivalent	Black or African American	South Carolina	B		A few times
19	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	South Carolina	B		Many times
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	South Carolina	A	Many times	
19	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	Ohio	B		Many times
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	South Carolina	B		Many times
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	South Carolina	B		Many times
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	SC	A	Many times	
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	B		Many times
23	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	Texas	B		Many times
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	South Carolina	A	Never	
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	Black or African American	South Carolina	B		A few times
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	B		A few times
23	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	Texas	A	A few times	
21	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	Middle Eastern or North African	Tennessee	A	Many times	
25	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	SC	B		Many times
21	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	A	Many times	
25	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	sc	A	Many times	
23	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	SC	A	Never	
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	South Carolina	A	Many times	
22	Male	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	White	SC	A	Many times	
20	Male	High school degree or equivalent	White	South Carolina	B		Many times

*A corresponds to “Lean Wit Me” and B corresponds to “Wishing Well”

Using ill	A young p	There are f	Using drugs	Many thing	Everyone wh	The laws abc	Drug use is	Drugs help pi	Schools sho	The police sh	To experim
1	5	4	2	3	2	4	3	2	5	1	4
2	2	4	1	3	3	2	3	1	5	2	2
5	5	4	1	3	5	3	5	1	5	1	4
5	4	3	4	3	2	1	2	3	5	4	2
3	2	5	1	3	5	2	1	1	5	1	4
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3	3	2	3	4	2	3	3	3	4	2	2
3	2	1	4	5	2	2	2	3	4	3	2
4	4	5	4	4	2	2	1	2	4	3	2
4	4	4	2	4	2	3	5	2	4	1	3
4	3	5	4	4	2	2	3	2	4	4	2
5	2	2	4	4	2	1	3	4	5	5	2
5	3	3	5	3	2	3	5	1	4	2	2
3	2	2	2	3	4	4	5	2	5	1	2
5	3	1	5	4	3	2	2	4	5	3	1
5	1	1	5	5	1	1	1	3	5	3	1
3	3	1	4	5	1	1	4	3	4	2	2
4	2	1	4	3	1	1	3	2	4	4	1
4	4	2	4	5	2	3	3	3	4	2	2
5	5	5	5	5	3	5	3	3	5	5	3
3	2	4	2	4	2	2	3	4	4	2	2
4	2	5	4	5	1	1	3	3	4	3	1
4	3	3	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	2	2
1	5	4	1	2	5	3	5	1	2	4	3
4	3	4	5	4	2	2	4	2	3	2	2
4	3	3	3	3	1	2	4	1	3	2	2
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3	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	2
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5	1	1	5	5	1	2	3	4	5	3	1
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5	3	3	5	4	1	2	5	3	5	3	1
5	4	4	4	2	2	2	5	1	4	1	3
2	4	3	2	4	3	2	4	1	5	3	3
5	3	4	4	2	1	1	5	3	5	4	2
3	4	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	4	2

Exhibit C – Anderson Darling Test





*Both sets of means were normally distributed

Exhibit D – Minitab Data / Survey Results

Method

Null hypothesis All means are equal
 Alternative hypothesis Not all means are equal
 Significance level $\alpha = 0.05$

Equal variances were assumed for the analysis.

Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Factor	1	15.79	15.79	0.31	0.584
Error	38	1966.11	51.74		
Total	39	1981.90			

Factor Information

Factor	Levels	Values
Factor	2	Lean Wit Me (A), Wishing Well (B)

Model Summary

S	R-sq	R-sq(adj)	R-sq(pred)
7.19303	0.80%	0.00%	0.00%

Means

Factor	N	Mean	StDev	95% CI
Lean Wit Me (A)	19	-3.79	7.32	(-7.13, -0.45)
Wishing Well (B)	21	-5.05	7.07	(-8.23, -1.87)

Pooled StDev = 7.19303

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