

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARK AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

THE SOUNDS OF COPING: LISTENING TO MUSIC AS A COPING
MECHANISM FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

SAMUEL H. THOMPSON

Spring 2010

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Recreation, Park and Tourism Management
with honors in Recreation, Park and Tourism Management

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Deborah Kerstetter
Associate Professor
Honors Advisor and Thesis Supervisor

Careen Yarnal
Associate Professor
Second Reader

*Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College

ABSTRACT

The stress experienced by college students and their means of coping with stress were examined through verbal descriptions of daily college stressors and accompanying coping mechanisms. The goal was to reveal the leisure activity of listening to music as a dominant coping mechanism used by college students. To calm themselves down from the stress of schoolwork, exams, and relationships, students cited listening to music as a coping mechanism more than any other activity. Listening to music by college students was also examined more closely on the basis of reasoning, genre preference, situational variance, and resulting feelings. The findings shed light on college student's perceptions and experiences with stress, in addition to the coping capabilities of listening to music. The findings also serve to enhance the literature on leisure coping, music, and other related topics.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Music Preferences.....	2
Music Listening as a Leisure Activity.....	3
Leisure Activities and Coping.....	4
Music as a Coping Mechanism.....	6
Adolescents and Coping.....	8
Study Purpose and Research Questions.....	9
Methodology.....	10
Sample.....	10
Procedures and Measures.....	10
Data Analysis.....	12
Results.....	14
Defining Stress.....	14
Sources of Stress.....	16
Dealing with Stress.....	20
Effective Coping.....	23
Listening to Music as a Coping Mechanism.....	25
Does Music Serve Another Purpose?	28
Music Preferences.....	28
After the Music.....	29
Discussion.....	33
Making Sense of it All.....	38
REFERENCES.....	40
APPENDIX A: Participant Pseudonyms.....	44
APPENDIX B: Response Themes and Subcategories.....	46
APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form.....	67

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Interview questions developed in response to the research questions....	13
Table 2. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “What is stress”?.....	16
Table 3. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “Can you tell me a bit about the stress you experience?”	20
Table 4. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “When you are experiencing these different forms of stress, how do you usually go about coping with the stress?”	23
Table 5. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “Why do you think those things help you to reduce stress?”	25
Table 6. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “One thing you mentioned was that you listen to music to cope with stress; could you explain why?”	27
Table 7. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “Could you describe how you feel after you have listened to music in an effort to cope with stressful situations?”	32

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been a great experience, and also a serious time commitment that I could not have completed without the support of others. From the moment I was accepted into the Schreyer Honors College, Dr. Deborah Kerstetter has been there for me. Over the course of two years, we met to discuss and revise my study progress frequently, oftentimes weekly, and exchanged countless emails to make this study a success. I cannot thank Deb enough for her kindness, understanding and guidance throughout this entire process.

I would also like to thank my incredible family for their continuous love and support throughout this study and my entire college career. They have always been there to keep me going through it all. Lastly, thanks to my friends for making my experience all the more enjoyable.

Introduction

Music in modern U.S. society is inescapable. It seems as if nearly everyone enjoys music, which is understandable considering the seemingly endless music genres that exist. People's varying tastes in music and reasons for their preferences are equally vast. As McCaffrey (2008) explains, "people have very definite preferences toward kinds of music on the basis of past experiences of musical listening, cultural and ethnic preferences, and personality type" (p. 43). Unclear from McCaffrey's and others' (Bruner, 1990; Panksepp, 1995) research is what purpose is served by music. For example, for me, listening to music most often serves as either a coping mechanism or a positive supplement to recreation and leisure activities. Do others my age also use music as a coping mechanism? Or, does music listening likely serve some other functions I have not considered? To address these questions I conducted a study to uncover these functions and draw connections between them and coping.

The way in which we listen to music has changed drastically over the past several years. When an artist has a hit song, individuals can instantly purchase the song and have it ready to take with them within seconds of its release. According to Reeher (2007), record labels are struggling because they have failed to adapt to the switch from consumers buying CDs in retail stores to using digital-download stores. Research shows that 40% of all music sales will go digital by 2012 (Gruenwedel, 2008). Many music consumers have no problem sacrificing the tangible nature of CDs for the cheaper price of music downloads. Based on my experience, using digital-download stores is also far more convenient than picking up a CD at a retail store, and convenience is expected in the fast-paced lifestyles of college students. An additional change is reflected in "the

decline of album-oriented radio in favor of the Top 40 format” (Reeher, 2007, p. A.13). Such changes have contributed to a music transition from “career artists,” who can be expected to produce multiple albums and hits, to artists with single hits. Thus, people are listening to a wider variety of artists and less tracks from each individual artist. They are also being more private with their music, confining music to their headphones rather than using speakers or boomboxes for others to hear (Brown, 2004). These changes in music have altered the way in which people listen to music, and therefore may have enhanced the role it serves for them.

Music Preferences

It is hard to draw connections between different people and their unique preferences for music. The key reason for this is the mysterious nature of music, and our minimal understanding of what makes it so important to humans. As McDermott (2008) explains, music is present in every known culture, and yet we still don’t know for sure what drives individuals’ desire to engage in music and their general obsession with it. One common belief is that our emotional response to the different scales and chords in music is rooted in our culture (McDermott, 2008). Even if this is the case, there is still notable variation in music preference within a given cultural group (Good et al., 2000).

There are multiple layers in music that could possibly influence our listening preferences. As Bruner (1990) explains, “music is not simply a generic sonic mass, but rather a complex chemistry of controllable elements” (p. 94). Some music could be listened to for the sake of the literal sounds, chords, notes, and harmonies produced by the instruments. At the same time, a music genre or style is often chosen based on the

lyrics it contains. Iwamoto, Creswell, and Caldwell (2007), for example, found that in the case of ethnically diverse college students who listen to rap music, many chose this genre because they are able to relate to the struggles mentioned in the lyrics. With the endless variety of sounds and lyrics music offers as a result of the unique individuals that created it, music preferences are ever-changing. The results of a study of college students by Weisskirch and Murphy (2004) showed that “participants listened most often to punk (16%), alternative (16%), pop/rock (9%), and hip hop (9%)” (p. 197). The somewhat low percentages for even the highest listened-to genres show the variance in music preference among college students, and these findings could certainly prove to be entirely different at another university.

Music Listening as a Leisure Activity

Listening to music is generally viewed as a leisure activity, but it is sometimes grouped with activities such as watching television or movies because it requires lower levels of physical or cognitive engagement (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Oh, 2006). Listening to music is an unstructured, passive activity in which music enters the ear of the listener, sound is processed in the mind, and the listener lets the sound evoke some response. According to Eccles and Templeton (2002), listening to music is one of the most commonly engaged in leisure activities. As one polling firm found, “nearly two-thirds of Americans said they listen to music everyday or nearly everyday” (Harlow, 2008, ¶ 4). Worldwide music listening has been documented as a favorite leisure activity, especially amongst college students. The results of a study by Holtzhausen and Strydom (2006), which included 167 college student respondents at the Tshwane University of

Technology in South Africa, displayed that preferred leisure interests were entertainment related, with listening to music being the only activity showing 100% participation amongst respondents. In addition, Nippold, Duthie, and Larsen (2005) found that 78% of students listed music as a favorite free-time activity. In the case of U.S. teens on the day prior to a survey, 77% had listened to music on the radio and 76% had listened to CD's or MP3's (Mason, 2004). Whether it's the lack of skill and effort required, the wide range of options, the easy accessibility, or any other feature that makes listening to music such an appealing leisure activity, it is safe to say that listening to music is an important leisure activity of college students. Perhaps listening to music also functions as a coping mechanism?

Leisure Activities and Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful. When negative emotions come about due to important goals being harmed, an individual's coping response is activated, which may or may not successfully resolve these negative emotions (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Information on coping has continued to emerge over the past few decades, much of it drawing connections between leisure engagement and coping. This is likely because many of the behaviors that individuals choose as a coping response can also be considered leisure activities.

According to Iwasaki and Mannell (2000), leisure serves a buffering role to "counteract the negative effects of stress on physical and mental health" (p. 164). Leisure participation also provides social support or mood enhancement, and gives participants a

sense of self-determination and autonomy in activities, which is otherwise absent in times of work. Hutchinson, Bland, and Kleiber (2008) suggest that coping is also attained through leisure outlets that provide challenge and achievement. Individuals' leisure choices can either be intentionally or unintentionally used in an effort to manage stress, and often choosing a leisure activity for some other reason will unexpectedly result in stress reduction (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000).

As Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) explain, leisure coping beliefs result in leisure choices based on what we believe will help to cope with stress, and these come into play when there is little situational influence on our actions. For example, an individual might believe that swimming helps her to cope with stress. Individuals also have leisure coping strategies, which are part of a process that begins with a stressful event and then triggers the desire for a leisure experience to enhance the situation and cope with stress. Using the previous example, the woman may have had a stressful day at work and copes by swimming laps. It is proposed that "leisure coping strategies *mediate* the effect of stress on health" (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 167). Leisure coping beliefs need to be established before leisure coping strategies can be used to effectively manage stress, yet when viewed separately these two concepts generally lead to different adaptational outcomes (Iwasaki, 2003). Again referring to our example, the swimmer first needed to believe that swimming reduces stress before she could use it as an effective coping strategy. Iwasaki (2001) confirmed his beliefs about leisure participation and coping through a study conducted with college students. He found that during a high period of stress leisure as a means of coping significantly contributed to a decrease in their mental health and an increase in their psychological well-being.

Aside from using leisure as a means of coping in reaction to stress, it can also be used proactively to prevent people from experiencing a lot of stress to begin with (Iwasaki, MacKay, & Mactavish, 2005). Hutchinson et al. (2008) argued that leisure coping manifests as leisure for self-preservation and leisure for self-restoration. Leisure for self-preservation is often used to momentarily take individuals' minds off their problems, whereas leisure for self-restoration tends to require more personal investment in the activity. As a partial overview of leisure's connection to coping, "Leisure may allow people to 'breathe' from stress, to 'restore' their spirit and positive attitude toward their lives, and to 'sustain' relevant coping effort to effectively manage stressors" (Iwasaki, 2003, p. 202), but we know little about music as a coping strategy.

Music as a Coping Mechanism

The ability to cope with stress by listening to music has not been examined as closely as other leisure activities, but there are some important findings nonetheless. Labbé, Schmidt, Babin, and Pharr (2007) were interested in the effects that various types of music had in coping with stress among college students. Fifty-six participants were first given a stressful test and then asked to either sit in silence for twenty minutes or listen to self-selected, classical, or heavy metal music for twenty minutes. The results confirmed their hypothesis that silence and listening to heavy metal music after the test would result in higher levels of anxiety and anger, and also lower levels of relaxation, than listening to self-selected or classical music. Self-selected music provided the highest levels of relaxation and lowest levels of anxiety and anger, which is interesting considering self-selected music could potentially be specifically chosen by college

students to reduce stress. A study involving adolescents by Hutchinson et al. (2006), which divided coping goals into active, accommodation, and avoidance, found listening to music to be most commonly associated with avoidance coping goals. While unstructured activities may give adolescents a chance to distance themselves, “unstructured activities [also] may serve a momentary relief or positive distraction function rather than an avoidance function” (p. 126). The researchers’ results suggest that college students may listen to music to either accommodate their stress or to avoid what caused it all together.

Listening to music has also been cited for its contribution in creating a healing environment for medical centers. According to McCaffrey (2008), who drew conclusions from studies typically involving older adults, music increases feelings of comfort while improving cognition, and also serves as a distraction from postoperative pain. The music preferences of patients can be assessed through the role music plays in their life, how they respond to it, when they listen to it, and what aspects make it appealing to them (Good et al., 2000). Though college students may not share the same causes of stress as older adults, a music healing environment could possibly be just as beneficial to them. Applying this concept internationally, Koen (2006) discussed the use of lyrical or instrumental music known as *falak* in Tajikistan, which serves as a spiritual medium to eliminate causes of stress and depression. Such examples demonstrate how music listening’s coping ability has served positive functions in varying cultures worldwide.

Hearing a certain kind of music can bring out one’s emotions without any other stimulus (McCaffrey, 2008). Hence, perhaps in times of stress, we listen to music to bring out a more pleasant emotion in an attempt to cope with the situation. As McCaffrey

suggests, “positive psychological effects of music include reduction of anxiety and stress” (p. 40). Most of us, including adolescents, take pleasure in some form of listening to music even if we don’t entirely understand what makes it enjoyable.

Adolescents and Coping

Adolescents are generally considered to be between the ages of 10 and 25 (Arnett, 2007). Thus, undergraduate college students are often treated as adolescents (e.g., Cassidy, 2005; Dixon & Robinson Kurpius, 2008). A key concept that differentiates between adult and adolescent coping is development. According to Hutchinson et al. (2006), “Adolescent coping is influenced by the physical, emotional, and cognitive development of the individual” (p. 118). Additionally, Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, and Wadsworth (2001) explain: “An individual’s developmental level both contributes to the resources that are available for coping and limits the types of coping responses the individual can enact” (p. 89). College students have already developed a number of coping resources and responses, yet their coping responses may still be influenced by their stage within the developmental process. Daily hassles are a dominant source of college stress, particularly changes in sleeping and eating habits, an increased workload, and new responsibilities (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). These sources of stress can be present throughout life, but their abundance during adolescence differentiates these years from adulthood.

Several other factors need to be considered when examining coping amongst college students. According to Band and Weisz (1988), a person’s age within adolescence can determine some of their coping strategies, such as a progressive increase in secondary

coping (e.g., emotional or cognitive) rather than primary coping (e.g., attempting to alter the circumstances). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) also differentiate between these two styles of coping, which they refer to as emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. As emotional coping increases with age, functional coping is believed to decrease (Frydenberg, 2004). In addition to age, gender also helps determine coping styles and strategies. Boys have been found to use physical recreation as a coping strategy more than girls, whereas girls utilize social support, wishful thinking, and tension reduction strategies (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). In this study college students will be referred to as adolescents due to the varying stages of development and subcategories within adolescence that may affect how they cope.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

Specific connections between college students and music listening as a coping mechanism remain to be drawn. While leisure has been continually shown to act as a coping mechanism and stress reducer, research regarding listening to music as a coping mechanism, though not entirely absent, is much less common. Thus, the purpose of this study is to document the functions listening to music serves for adolescents and to draw connections between these functions and coping. The specific research questions posed were:

1. How do college students define stress?
2. Do college students experience stress in their daily life?
3. How do college students cope with stress in their daily life?

4. Do college students use music as a mechanism for coping with stress in their daily life?
5. What type of music do college students use as a coping mechanism for stress in their daily life?
6. Does the type of music college students use as a coping mechanism for stress in their daily life vary by situation?
7. What are the outcomes of using music as a coping mechanism for stress in their daily life?

Methodology

Prior to conducting the study, IRB approval was obtained from the Office for Research Protection at Penn State. Approval (IRB # 30643) to commence with the study was granted on April 6, 2009.

Sample

The population for this study was full-time undergraduate students aged 18 to 25 who are enrolled full-time at a large university in the northeastern United States. Snowball sampling (i.e., a set of individuals who possess certain characteristics as defined by the researcher) was used to obtain 24 subjects who met the study criteria (i.e., 18 to 25, enrolled full-time, and listen to music).

Procedures and Measures

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the study sample. Interviews were chosen as the method of data collection because they permit the

researcher to go into much greater depth than other methods of data collection. Prior to conducting in-depth interviews a pilot study was conducted with members of the study population to ensure that they understood and were responsive to the questions that were to be used to guide the in-depth interview. The pilot study revealed that additional interview questions should be added to obtain more in-depth responses from participants. To gain a broader understanding of participants' concept of the term stress and to help spark their own self-understanding, the question, 'What is stress?' was added as the opening question in the interview. Additional questions were also added to better understand participants who did not directly cite listening to music as a mechanism for coping with stress. These questions included asking participants how often they listen to music, and whether or not they believe music has the ability to alter one's mood. A final addition to the interview questions involved asking participants why they feel the activities they utilize to cope with stress are effective.

Approximately 75 students were contacted, both through a residence hall listserv and by recommendation of friends. All were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. As an incentive, participants were offered an assortment of snack food and soda during their interview. Interested participants (n=24) were told to contact me directly, at which point I coordinated a convenient interview time and location for all study participants. The actual in-depth interview process began with a review of the study, including the fact that the interview was to be digitally recorded. Individuals were also asked to review and retain an informed consent form. The interviews were guided by questions that were developed in response to the research questions (see Table 1). A total of 24 interviews were conducted at which point saturation occurred (i.e., no new findings

emerged). Saturation, which is generally thought to represent the point at which no new information is obtained, often occurs at 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with data transcription. The results were then coded using open coding and constant comparison. This involved my advisor and I listening to the first two interviews, assigning codes to the contents of each interview, and then meeting to compare the codes we had established. Verification coding was then completed on each set of interviews before creating an updated coding list and moving on to the next set of interviews until all interviews were coded.

Table 1. Interview questions developed in response to the research questions

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question(s)
How do college students define stress?	What is stress?
Do college students experience stress in their daily life?	a.) Would you say that you experience stress in your daily life? b.) Can you tell me about the stress you experience in your daily life?
How do college students cope with stress in their daily life?	How do you cope with the stress you experience in your daily life?
Do college students use music as a mechanism for coping with stress in their daily life?	(For those who indicated that they listen to music to cope with stress)—You indicated that you listen to music to cope with stress, can you tell me why? (For those who do not indicate that they listen to music to cope with stress)—Do you ever listen to music to cope with stress? If yes, can you tell me why?
What type of music do college students use as a coping mechanism for stress in their daily life?	What type of music do you listen to when you are stressed?
Does the type of music college students use as a coping mechanism for stress in their daily life vary by situation?	Does the type of music you listen to when you are stressed change, depending on the type of stress you are experiencing?
What are the outcomes of using music as a coping mechanism for stress in their daily life?	Could you describe how you feel after you have listened to music in an effort to cope with stressful situations?

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if college students listen to music as a coping mechanism for stress. To respond to the study purpose, I first needed to gather information on how students define stress and what causes their stress, if any, before moving on to how they cope with it. The results are presented by interview question and the major themes and subcategories which underlie the answers to each question. Where appropriate, tables including sample statements for each major subcategory are included. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of study participants (see Appendix A).

Defining Stress

When asked “What is stress?”, students’ responses were quite diverse. Some shared personal descriptions of their own mental and physical changes associated with stress, while others defined stress by referring to external factors that create it. Accordingly, two overarching themes emerged: “Internal Factors” and “External Factors.” A description of each theme and its subcategories follow.

Internal Factors

The most commonly recurring theme in students’ descriptions of stress involved internal responses to stress. This theme also had numerous subcategories, the most notable (i.e., those including 10% or more of the responses) being: “Feelings of anxiety” (n=8), “Pressure” (n=5), “Ready to go crazy” (n=4), and “Tension” (n=4) (Table 2). With respect to feelings of anxiety, many students referred to stress and anxiety interchangeably. For example, they suggested, “Stress would be an elevated [kind] of

anxiety due to any number of things that are going on in a person's life," "I kind of relate it to anxiety," and "Anxiety just takes over completely and you don't know what to do." Along with feelings of anxiety, students also described stress as "Pressure": "I think stress is just when you're under a lot of pressure to do things..." and "Pressure, due to [the fact that] it could be due to multiple reasons." Additionally, students described stress as going crazy or something close to it. Their definitions included, "You just don't know what to do really and you go crazy," "Stress to me is when you're just feeling like you're at the breaking point," or, stress is simply being "freaked out." Stress was also described as "Tension." Max suggested, "You're kind of just tense, tensed up," while Katie indicated that stress is "...Feeling lots of tension that you don't like."

External Factors

The second overarching theme in students' descriptions of stress was the external factors that create it. "Having lots of stuff going on at once" (n=10) was the most common response, followed by "Time crunch" (n=5) (Table 2). The first sub-category was described by Theresa as, "when you have a lot of stuff on your plate." Similar responses were: "[The] feeling that you get when you have too much to do" and "When you feel overwhelmed." "Time Crunch," on the other hand, included responses like: "You feel stressed that you're not going to get everything done on time," "When you're feeling rushed," and "I think... stress is compounded when you don't have a lot of time".

Table 2. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “What is stress”?

Category	Sample statement
Internal Factors (n=45)	
1. Feelings of anxiety (n=8)	1. “...When you have a feeling of anxiety.”
2. Pressure (n=5)	2. “A lot of stuff going on at the same time and you just feel the pressure.”
3. Ready to go crazy (n=4)	3. “...Feeling like you’re at the breaking point.”
4. Tension (n=4)	4. “Stress is tension.”
External Factors (n=24)	
1. Having lots of stuff going on at once (n=10)	1. “When you have a lot of stuff going on at the same time.”
2. Time crunch (n=5)	2. “...I feel that it is a time crunch.”

Note: Response categories/responses that did not include 10% or more of the responses are located in Appendix B.

Sources of Stress

The hesitation displayed by some college students while defining stress was certainly not present during their opportunity to explain its many sources. Each student was asked, “Would you say that you experience stress in your daily life?” All but three students responded, “yes.” While these students do not have daily stress, they do experience stress at different times. Those who said they experience daily stress were asked a follow-up question: “Can you tell me a bit about the stress you experience?” and, as expected, they indicated that much of their stress comes from school and work. Students also cited personal and relationship-based stressors, as well as stress involving activities and events or planning and organization. The three overarching themes in students’ responses were: “School/Work,” “Personal/Relational,” and “Events/Planning” (Table 3).

School/Work

All the students referenced at least one aspect of school that creates stress in their daily lives. The most frequent subcategories mentioned (i.e., those including 10% or more of the responses) were as follows: “Doing homework constantly” (n=16), “School” (n=10), “Studying for exams” (n=9), and “Different assignments to do” (n=8) (Table 3). As the numbers for the first subcategory show, it is clear that homework is a big contributor to students’ daily stress. Students indicated, “Well, I think with being in college, along with everybody else here, school work is a big factor in stress” and “Of course school work is a big deal.” The next largest subcategory was “School,” which was cited by students as either a lead up to or an umbrella term for other subcategories in this theme. As Jill noted, “Stress usually comes for me from like school related activities.” For others, school was really the only factor creating stress in their lives: “School related yeah, I don’t have much other stress,” “Usually it’s school, right now it’s just school, anything else is...nothing really too big.” Another aspect of school that students mentioned was “Studying for exams”: “If I have a lot of tests in the same week,” “Exams... I get really worked up when I have anything to study for,” and “I just think how like exams all come at one time...I feel really stressed, [which] one do I study for most, and how much time do I have to dedicate to it, and usually there’s multiple exams.” Lastly, many students discussed having “Different assignments to do.” Sarah, for example, suggested, “Knowing you have something to do regardless of whether it is a big assignment or a little assignment,” whereas Diana said stress was related to “remembering all of the little things that you need to do.”

Personal/Relational

Along with school, students described both personal and interpersonal stressors they experience on a daily basis, particularly the latter. Two subcategories included 10% or more of the responses: “Friendships” (n=6) and “Family stress” (n=4) (Table 3). It seems that students’ relationships with their friends create stressful situations. Some sample responses were: “Sometimes social stuff like friends you know, everyone has like stressful situations sometimes,” and “Friends are something like that cause a lot of stress.” “Family stress,” on the other hand, reinforces students’ focus on the personal/relational. For example, Jenn described her family stress situation, stating, “At home like family stress that sort of thing, you know. I get along with my family pretty well but again there are always times when there is tension.”

Events/Planning

The final overarching theme regarding sources of stress involves upcoming events, as well as planning around or managing these types of activities. The most common subcategories of this theme included: “Upcoming event” (n=5), “Extracurricular activities” (n=4), “How much time to dedicate” (n=4), and “Scheduling” (n=3) (Table 3). Student stress was apparently influenced not only by the present, but also the future, particularly upcoming events: “I have like stress for longer periods of time or if I have something big coming up, I really get nervous about it” or “If there’s like... some big event that I am like anticipating or something like that.” Diana described the stress of an upcoming extracurricular event: “I do club cross country, stressing about my races and stuff.” Student references to stress from extracurricular activities were: “I have been

involved with...a lot of extracurricular and other responsibilities that I did,” and “I try to be involved.” Students also expressed concern related to time management. In this instance students were worried about “how much time [they] have to dedicate to [an event]” as well as the fact that it may take them “...a little longer [than] most to do a simple assignment.” The last of the subcategories representing at least 10% of the responses was, “Scheduling.” Students were stressed out trying to “make sure that everything is happening at the right time.”

Table 3. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “Can you tell me a bit about the stress you experience?”

Category	Sample statement
School/Work (n=65)	
1. Doing homework constantly (n=16)	1. “My stress is always about schoolwork.”
2. School (n=10)	2. “...Basically school is like the intense stress.”
3. Studying for exams (n=9)	3. “[Having a] whole bunch of tests and stuff.”
4. Different assignments to do (n=8)	4. “I have so much to do right now.”
Personal/Relational (n=34)	
1. Friendships (n=6)	1. “...Friends that have problems.”
2. Family stress (n=4)	2. “,,I have people going through things.”
Events/Planning (n=21)	
1. Upcoming event (n=5)	1. “...If there’s like some big event that I am like anticipating or something like that.”
2. Extracurricular activities (n=4)	2. “...Different extracurricular activities I am in.”
3. How much time to dedicate (n=4)	3. “...It takes me I think a little bit longer than most to do a simple assignment.”
4. Scheduling (n=3)	4. “I kind of like get paranoid trying to organize things.”

Note: Response categories/responses that did not include 10% or more of the responses are located in Appendix B.

Dealing with Stress

After hearing about the sources of stress in student’s lives, it was time to find out how they cope with the stress. Students were asked, “When you are experiencing these different forms of stress, how do you usually go about coping with the stress?” The three key themes in response to this question were: “Activities,” “Mental Adjustments,” and “Alteration/Removal” (Table 4).

Activities

Students apparently find that the best way to deal with stress is through taking part in activities, either by themselves or with others. Due to the abundance of activities listed, the only subcategory comprising at least 10% of the responses to this question was “Listen to music” (n=14) (Table 4). Whether it’s during work, while taking a break, or walking to class, listening to music is evidently the go-to activity for many students. Josh gave a good description of his use of music: “I do listen to music like a lot so, I would say that that is a huge factor, that is one thing that I do, you deal with stress in different kinds of music.” Another descriptive response came from Christy, who stated, “[I] listen to my iPod a lot while going from place to place, so I feel like that calms me down as I relate well to the music.” Of the 33 different activities noted, some other common ones (though not 10% of the responses) were working out (n=6) and talking about the stress or venting (n=5). The entire list of responses can be found in Appendix B.

Mental Adjustments

In response to stress students also make adjustments to achieve a more desirable state of mind. This theme had five significant subcategories: “Relaxing” (n=7), “Dealing with it” (n=5), “Putting everything into perspective” (n=4), “Off topic” (n=3), and “Thinking about it” (n=3) (Table 4). Oftentimes students referenced activities they considered relaxing in their response to this question, but for the most part relaxation was an important stand alone mental adjustment. Sample statements were: “[I] just relax and then go back and do it,” “I try to relax,” and “Doing the kinds of things that you find relaxing.” Students also mentioned how, when it comes to stress, they simply “Deal with

it” (n=5). They do this by “...just [taking] it head on” and “...Just [doing] whatever [they’re] doing and then hopefully [the stress] goes away.” Others find it helpful to put everything into perspective by “[Looking] at the whole situation,” “Looking at the big picture,” or “...[Realizing] that what you’re stressed out about really isn’t as big of a deal as you think it is.” In addition, some students cope with their stress by “[Getting] their mind off that subject.” As Brian suggested, “[I] try not to think about it too much mostly. Too much worrying about it can be worse than the initial stress to begin with.” Alternatively, a small number (n=3) choose to think about the stress. They think “...about it for a little bit,” “...internalize on it,” or simply “take some time to think about everything.”

Alteration/Removal

As a final theme, students described ways in which they attempt to alter stressful circumstances or escape them altogether. Of the responses in this theme, two subcategories included 10% or more of the responses: “Remove myself from the situation” (n=8) and “Plan/organize” (n=4) (Table 4). Understandably, many students found that a great way to cope with stress is to simply get away from it. Jill’s strategy was: “I just try to wait until I am not angry or super stressed out and come back to the situation.” Other students described removing themselves from the situation: “I try to take a step back from it,” “I usually just like step away from it for a minute,” and “[I] remove [myself] from it.” Students also plan or get organized to reduce their stress. For example, Christy said, “[I] make sure that I have a plan on what I am going to do so that I

feel like I have accomplished something” whereas Kristin simply “divide[s]... up what [she] needs to get done.”

Table 4. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “When you are experiencing these different forms of stress, how do you usually go about coping with the stress?”

Category	Sample statement
Activities (n=77)	
1. Listen to music (n=14)	1. “I do listen to music when I am stressed.”
Mental Adjustments (n=29)	
1. Relaxing (n=7)	1. “...I will just relax.”
2. Dealing with it (n=5)	2. “I deal with it.”
3. Putting everything into perspective (n=4)	3. “[I] put everything into perspective.”
4. Off topic (n=3)	4. “I try not to think about it too much.”
5. Thinking about it (n=3)	5. “I internalize on it.”
Alteration/Removal (n=27)	
1. Remove myself from the situation (n=8)	1. “...Remove yourself from it.”
2. Plan/organize (n=4)	2. “I try to organize myself.”

Note: Response categories/responses that did not include 10% or more of the responses are located in Appendix B.

Effective Coping

After describing the ways in which they cope with stress, students were asked, “Why do you think those things help you to reduce stress?” Two themes emerged: “Removal” (n=19) and “Relax/Release” (n=14) (Table 5).

Removal

Once again, students discussed the usefulness of removing themselves from stressful situations. The significant subcategories within this theme included: “Gets my mind off what I am thinking about” (n=9), “Gets me away” (n=5), and “Gets it off my chest” (n=3) (Table 5). More than anything else, it appears that students utilize methods that allow them to get their mind off of sources of stress. Patrick talked about how this method works for him, stating, “I guess I am stressed out if I think about it a lot, so if I do those things, I don’t think about it as much. So, if I am not doing the work I am not thinking about it which makes me less stressed.” Another example came from Chris, who explained, “I think it mentally takes your mind off the stress.” Other students discussed similar concepts of removal, but not necessarily as a mental phenomenon. For example, they said, “It kind of takes you into a different world for a little while,” and “Just to get out of my room and the library, away from the books just to kind of remove yourself.” Lastly, removal was described by students as getting something off their chest. According to Lisa, “You just are able to get everything that you’re feeling off your chest.”

Relax/Release

Relaxation and the release of emotions were also cited as methods of coping with stress. Two subcategories comprising 10% of the responses or more under this theme were: “Release of energy/emotions” (n=8) and “Relaxation” (n=5) (Table 5). It seems that stressful situations carry with them an excess of energy and emotions which students

seek to eliminate. For example, Theresa and Andrew suggested that their method of coping “... relieve[s]... feelings,” and gives “...physical relief.” For Ben, the response to stress “... can take your frustration out.” Oftentimes students also seek relaxation through their coping mechanisms. As Andrew explains, “I think that [taking a nap] calms you down....”

Table 5. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “Why do you think those things help you to reduce stress?”

Category	Sample statement
Removal (n=19)	
1. Gets my mind off what I am thinking about (n=9)	1. “I think it gets your mind off things.”
2. Gets me away (n=5)	2. “...Just getting away from that.”
3. Gets it off my chest (n=3)	3. “...Getting it off of my chest.”
Relax/Release (n=14)	
1. Release of energy/emotions (n=8)	1. “...Release of any negative emotions.”
2. Relaxation (n=5)	2. “...It’s relaxing.”

Note: Response categories/responses that did not include 10% or more of the responses are located in Appendix B.

Listening to Music as a Coping Mechanism

Students who had mentioned listening to music as a coping mechanism were asked, “One thing you mentioned was that you listen to music to cope with stress; could you explain why?” Most students described some sort of improvement that resulted from listening to music, be it mental or physical. On the other hand, many students also explained that they choose music for a certain feature of music itself. As a result, the

main themes were: “Mental/Physical Improvement” (n=31) and “The Music Itself” (n=21) (Table 6).

Mental/Physical Improvement

The most common reason for listening to music was simply that it improves the way students feel during stressful times. The key subcategories of this theme were: “Calms me down” (n=11) and “Think of good memories” (n=4) (Table 6). Upon hearing this question, many students wasted no time in commending music’s ability to calm them down. Some examples of their comments were “If it’s the right kind of music it’s relaxing,” “...[music] mentally helps you, like calms yourself down,” and “[Music] makes me calmer.” Another interesting trait that students assigned to music is its ability to evoke positive memories. According to Diana, “I will listen to a song that reminds me of somebody in my family or something like that, I will listen to that as it will make me feel better.”

The Music Itself

Instead of discussing mental and physical improvements, some students explained how they listen to music because of its literal characteristics. The subcategories of this theme were: “Think about the music rather than the work” (n=5), “The meaning behind it” (n=3), and “Someone is conveying a message” (n=3) (Table 6). Music can be listened to during other activities, and in the case of college students this generally means listening to music while doing work. Examples of students taking advantage of this facet of music include: “I can’t describe the feeling, you know, it’s something to occupy you

know, part of your mind instead of just silence and work,” and “It takes your mind off of it, what’s stressing you out.” Music also carries with it various meanings, unique to each listener. Some students referenced these meanings when describing their reason for listening to music as a coping mechanism. Kristin said, “If I can identify with a song then I can like kind of feel better.” Similar to the meanings in music are the messages that it carries, particularly those delivered through lyrics. Josh describes this particular scenario, stating, “I think that the reason that we listen to music is because of the message that each artist can like convey to me.”

Table 6. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “One thing you mentioned was that you listen to music to cope with stress; could you explain why?”

Category	Sample statement
Mental/Physical Improvement (n=31)	
1. Calms me down (n=11)	1. “...Like calming music...I feel that it helps me settle down.”
2. Think of good memories (n=4)	2. “...To remind me of happy times.”
The Music Itself (n=21)	
1. Think about the music rather than the work (n=5)	1. “...Kind of makes me not... [think] of all the things that I have to do.”
2. The meaning behind it (n=3)	2. “If you can find a song that you can relate to.”
3. Someone is conveying a message (n=3)	3. “...The lyrics.”

Note: Response categories/responses that did not include 10% or more of the responses are located in Appendix B.

Does Music Serve Another Purpose?

While not every student interviewed mentioned listening to music as a coping mechanism, it is likely that some who didn't mention music may still use it to cope. To find out, students who did not mention music (n=10) were asked: "How often do you listen to music?" Though some students indicated that they don't listen to music often (n=6) or they only listen sometimes (n=4), they were also asked, "Do you ever listen to music to cope with stress? If so, why?" The student response to the first half of this question was almost an even split, with six saying, "yes," and five saying, "no." Those who said yes went on to explain that their reasons for listening to music were "The Music Itself" (n=7) or for "Mental/Physical Improvement" (n=6). In terms of the music itself, students recognized that the lyrics and melody are something they can relate to while music as mental and physical improvement allows students to get to another place or be distracted (all responses to this question can be found in Appendix B).

Those who said no to, "Do you ever listen to music to cope with stress?" were asked, "Do you think music has the ability to change your mood?" and the majority (n=11) responded, "Yes" or "Sometimes" (n=11). Evidently, even the students who don't utilize music to cope with stress still recognize its mood altering capabilities.

Music Preferences

Because most of the students interviewed listen to music to cope with stress, the next task was to find out if a particular genre was listened to more than others for stress-relief. Students were asked, "What type of music do you listen to when you are stressed?" The responses were extremely diverse. Of the numerous subcategories documented

(n=26), more than half (n=16) were unique to an individual respondent (refer to Appendix B for the complete list of subcategories). In terms of the subcategories, students indicated that they listen to “Mellow” (n=10) music, which apparently encompasses several genres based on student descriptions of the term. Another common response was that there was no particular genre, and that students “Listen to it all” (n=6).

Though no particular genre is listened to for stress relief, I wondered whether or not the type of music students listened to could change depending on the type of stress students are dealing with. Therefore I asked, “Does the type of music you listen to when you are stressed change, depending on the type of stress you are experiencing?” This response was another near-even split, with some students saying “No” (n=11), that the music remains fairly consistent, and others saying “Yes” (n=12), that the music changes depending on the stress. The positive responses were a bit too diverse for any significant subcategories to emerge. For example, Josh explained, “When I am angry or something like at my parents I will pop in some music, something angry, something hard.” On the other hand, Josh also continued on to describe, “If I am angry I don’t want to listen to, like, a pop star.”

After the Music

The final question, “Could you describe how you feel after you have listened to music in an effort to cope with stressful situations?” was asked to determine if listening to music is a successful coping mechanism. This question was also asked to get a better idea of how music makes students feel when they are done listening to it. Three central

themes in student responses surfaced: “Increased Control/Realization” (n=23), “Good/Better” (n=20), and “Relaxed/Refreshed/Calm” (n=19) (Table 7).

Increased Control/Realization

The responses comprising this theme focused on thinking more clearly after listening to music, and gaining more control over the situation. The main subcategories were: “More ready to continue with the situation” (n=6), “More in control” (n=5), and “It just defocuses me” (n=3) (Table 7). Andrew, for example, described the phenomenon of being more in control as, “I think maybe your problems are a little bit more manageable.... Like after you, I don’t know, realize that... you have it more under control.” Another benefit cited was that listening to music can assist students as they continue on with a stressful situation. Katie indicated that after listening to music she “...think[s] of a... game plan of how [she’s] going to tackle whatever the problem is.” This is not so different from Theresa’s comment: “Just makes me more ready to continue on with whatever the situation may be.” The final significant subcategory entails students getting their focus off of the stress. As Amanda explained, “[Music] gets my mind off everything.”

Good/Better

After listening to music students simply feel good, or better than they had felt before. The subcategories of this theme were: “Better” (n=4), “I feel pretty good” (n=4), “Pumped up” (n=3), and “Reduces the stress” (n=3) (Table 7). In terms of feeling better, students made comments like, “Generally, I feel better.” Students not only described their

feelings as better, but also as good: “I feel pretty good,” or “It’s good.” There were also several instances where students suggested that they experienced increased energy or a “boost of energy;” they were “pumped up about [their] day.” Listening to music also resulted in feelings of reduced stress: “[Music] wipes some of the stress away for a while.”

Relaxed/Refreshed/Calm

The final theme encompasses a variety of different positive feelings, particularly those involving relaxation or calming oneself down. The subcategories comprising this theme were: “More relaxed” (n=6), “Good way to calm myself down for the moment” (n=5), “Refreshed” (n=4), and “It helps” (n=3) (Table 7). Relaxation was a huge factor in helping students to reduce stress through music. This subcategory was described as: “I would say you feel more relaxed,” or “I feel like [music] relaxes me and stuff.” Much in the same way music relaxes students, it also calms them down. For example, students indicated that “Music does calm [them] down” and “[They] feel more comforted.” Another finding was that music has the ability to refresh students. As Max explained, “I kind of feel like I have a fresh start.” Finally, students said that listening to music, simply “helps.”

Table 7. Categories and subcategories representing ten percent or more of the responses to the question, “Could you describe how you feel after you have listened to music in an effort to cope with stressful situations?”

Category	Sample statement
Increased Control/Realization (n=23)	
1. More ready to continue with the situation (n=6)	1. “[Music] will help me just continue and get it done with.” 2. “Keeps me from hitting the panic button.” 3. “[Music] just kind of makes me think about something else.”
2. More in control (n=5)	
3. It just defocuses me (n=3)	
Good/Better (n=20)	
1. Better (n=4)	1. “Definitely a lot better.” 2. “It’s good.” 3. “Pumped up about my day.” 4. “It seems to always reduce my stress level.”
2. I feel pretty good (n=4)	
3. Pumped up (n=3)	
4. Reduces the stress (n=3)	
Relaxed/Refreshed/Calm (n=19)	
1. More relaxed (n=6)	1. “I definitely feel more relaxed.” 2. “[I] feel more calm.” 3. “You can come back and start over again.” 4. “I think most of the time it helps.”
2. Good way to calm myself down for the moment (n=5)	
3. Refreshed (n=4)	
4. It helps (n=3)	

Note: Response categories/responses that did not include 10% or more of the responses are located in Appendix B.

Discussion

Undergraduate college students experience stress in their daily lives. They define stress by the internal and external factors—predominantly schoolwork—which create it. To cope with stress, students participate in a variety of activities, including listening to music. There is no specific genre of music that students listen to most frequently, nor does the type of music used necessarily change depending on the type of stress they are experiencing. After listening to music, however, students feel better due to increased relaxation and control.

The ways in which students defined stress were similar to how it has been defined and discussed in the literature. For example, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested that stressful situations are generated through internal and external demands. Students suggested the same. In terms of internal stress, students frequently mentioned “anxiety.” Labbé et al. (2007) used the terms anxiety and stress alongside one another, as did McCaffrey (2008) in his discussion of music’s positive psychological effects. Additionally, students suggested that external stress comes from, “lots of stuff going on at once.” Ross et al. (1999) documented increased workload and new responsibilities to be among the dominant sources of college stress in their study of undergraduate students.

Given Ross et al.’s (1999) earlier study of college students’ stress, it was expected in this study that college students would indeed experience stress. My results confirmed this fact, and I found that, for most college students, stress is experienced daily. The primary sources of daily stress for college students were largely the same as those found by Ross et al., with schoolwork being the leading contributor. However, an interesting finding here that strayed from expectations based on the literature was the prevalence of

relational stressors. Friendships, for example, which are a documented coping strategy (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993), were actually found in this study to be a source of stress in addition to a mechanism to cope with it. This brings about an interesting implication in which the sources of stress for college students may be the same as the mechanisms used to eliminate it. Perhaps in the case of friends, this is simply a result of stress from others permeating into one's own life. The stress-inducing facets of friendship seem to be balanced by the benefits of social support, however, suggesting that friendships are a worthwhile coping mechanism for students.

Researchers have continually found music to be a favorite leisure activity amongst college students. Similarly I found that well over 50% of students consider listening to music to be the most popular leisure activity. Students indicated that they listen to music at least on occasion. This result was shared by Holtzhausen and Strydom (2006), who found listening to music as the only activity with 100% participation amongst college students. It appears listening to music is not only a favorite leisure activity amongst college students, but also their favorite coping mechanism. Perhaps favorite leisure activities are chosen on the basis of the effective coping they provide, much like the leisure coping beliefs described by Iwasaki and Mannell (2000). Or, the reverse may also be true, in which certain activities provide effective coping because they are already considered favorable. Either way, a relationship between favorite leisure activities and effective coping certainly appears to exist.

Student coping mechanisms found in this study were also in line with the literature on adolescent coping. The progressive increase in secondary coping (i.e., emotional coping) and decrease in primary coping discussed by Band and Weisz (1988)

is determined by age. Frydenberg (2004) described this progressive increase in emotional coping and decrease in 'functional' coping with age as well. College students in this study are in the late stages of adolescence, and accordingly discussed a number of mental and emotional adjustments used to cope with stress. Even still, there was also a significant amount of primary coping listed, both in the form of physical activities and alteration. The primary coping mechanism of removal from the situation, popular among students, provided support for Hutchinson et al.'s (2006) argument that music allows people to cope by "avoiding" situations.

As students explained their reasons for listening to music as a coping mechanism, the calming power of music became clear. McCaffrey (2008) discussed music's ability to bring out one's emotions and provide increased feelings of comfort. McCaffrey also discussed the ability of music to distract, much in the same way students are able to think about the music they listen to rather than their schoolwork. It is worth noting that McCaffrey's study involved older adults, because given the similarities to this study on college students, it seems music can have the same coping effects on people of all ages.

The results of this study, along with personal experience, have shown me that music preferences change over time, while the ability to cope through music remains constant. Perhaps we continually change our music preferences in order to maintain these coping effects. If so, this would also help explain the wide range of music genres that this study sample listened to. The wide range of genres and progressive rotation through genre preference suggest that it may be impossible to ever isolate a genre as the undisputed favorite.

The “complex chemistry of controllable elements” (Bruner, 1990, p. 94) that music has been described as seems to be recognized by college students as well. Individual students referenced the sounds and instruments comprising music, and a significant number also discussed the meaning behind the music and its lyrics, further enforcing Bruner’s theory that music is not one generic mass. Associations between students and the meanings and lyrics behind music were similar to those found by Iwamoto et al. (2007). It is interesting how helpful it can be for students to simply hear a song make reference to a problem they have been facing. This once again seems tied to social support coping mechanisms.

The large variation in music preference of a cultural group discussed by Good et al. (2000), as well as the numerous personal factors that determine music preferences of an individual (McCaffrey, 2008), all came into play when collecting genre preference data from this study sample. Even with the common goal of coping with stress, it seemed as if every student had his or her own unique music preferences. The term ‘mellow’ that students referenced most frequently was comprised of several varying genres, showing no real findings of preference. Weisskirch and Murphy’s (2004) study also found low response percentages for even the most frequently referenced genres, with punk and alternative being the highest at 16% each. Considering that alternative music was only referenced twice in this study and absolutely no reference was made to punk music, the study results certainly support Good et al.’s (2000) research on varying music preference across cultures.

Where the genre-related findings of this study differ from the research is in the case of Labbé et al. (2007). They found that sitting in silence or listening to heavy metal

music after a stressful test increased levels of anxiety and anger for college students. I, however, found that some students actually prefer heavy metal and hard music when they are angry or stressed out. This finding is likely attributed to heavy metal being a preferred genre of such students, whereas in the study by Labbé et al. the students had the heavy metal genre chosen for them. Anger and heavy music is just one of several positively correlated relationships referenced by students. Others included sadness resulting in sad music and happiness resulting in pop music to dance to. These positive correlations were more along the lines of what I expected from students, but given the exploratory nature of this study further research is needed to verify that there is a significant correlation between mood state and music listening behavior.

Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) discussed the buffering role that leisure serves to counteract the negative effects of stress. The results of this study confirm that listening to music is yet another form of leisure capable of serving a buffering role. College students described feeling better, more relaxed, and more in control over stressful situations.

Further, the findings on post-leisure participation feelings were the same as those documented in two separate studies by Iwasaki (2001, 2003). Iwasaki indicated that leisure coping allows people to effectively manage stressors, in this case college students gaining more control over a situation through music. He also discussed restoration of positive attitude, much like the students in this study who were “more ready to continue with the situation.” It is fascinating how closely linked the results from this part of the study were to Iwasaki’s research. Evidently listening to music fits in strongly amongst other effective leisure coping activities.

Making Sense of it All

As I think back to what I hoped to discover before this study began, and then consider what this study has revealed, I find myself very satisfied with the results. I wanted to better understand college student's love of music and, in particular, determine if they listen to music to cope with stress. Each research question yielded answers close to my expectations, but students also described feelings about and personal reasons for listening to music that I could not have predicted. It was interesting using a study population of college students because, being a student myself, I could not help but relate to and understand many of their responses to the various interview questions. This was also probably a factor in my expectations being fulfilled so closely.

While student responses successfully answered my research questions, there are also some unanswered questions that have arisen from this study. One such question is whether another dominant leisure activity that students use to cope with stress would have emerged had more students been involved in the study. Some coping activities came up several times, such as working out, which leads me to believe there may have been something else significant worth uncovering. I am also somewhat unclear on the details of how students change music genre based on the type of stress they experience, because while many of them do not change genre, those that do may have had more to share had I probed for more information.

If I were to do this study again, I would compare listening to music with a separate leisure activity of student's choosing throughout the interview. For example, a student who listens to music but also cites playing videogames would be asked more in-depth questions about gaming, in addition to the questions about listening to music. This

would allow me to better understand the similarities and differences associated with listening to music and other leisure activities. Also, to uncover more information about types of music students listen to based on the type of stressful situation they are facing, I would consider presenting students with several stress-based scenarios prior to the interview. Students would be asked to select their preferred music for each of the scenarios rather than having to formulate these scenarios on the spot, which I think created some confusion during the interview process.

I would also like to more accurately identify how often students listen to music. To do this, I could ask study participants to keep a time diary over the course of one week. They would be asked to record the time, duration, and reasons for listening to music that week. There would likely be difficulties in ensuring that each student keeps an honest time diary, but the results could be worthwhile.

Another modification to my study design would be to conceal the topic of music from participants for as long as possible. The consent forms required to be given to study participants had the title of my study on them, which revealed from the start that this study was about music. I do not feel this altered student responses in any way, but perhaps more students who listen to music would have needed reminding of their doing so if the topic of music had remained a mystery from the start. However, I think in trying to recruit interview participants, informing them that the study involved music had a definite pull factor in their agreement to participate.

References

- Akande, B. O. (2008). The I.P.O.D. generation. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 25(15), 20.
- Arnett, J. J. (2007). *International encyclopedia of adolescence*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis. Retrieved February 12, 2009, from <http://www.routledge-ny.com/ref/adolescence/introduction.html>
- Band, E. B., & Weisz, J. R. (1988). How to feel better when it feels bad: Children's perspectives on coping with everyday stress. *Developmental Psychology*, 24(2), 247-253.
- Brown, D. (2004). MP3s silently sending blaring boomboxes the way of the 8-track. *Denver Post*, p. A.01. Retrieved November 4, 2008 from ProQuest National Newspapers Premier database.
- Bruner, G. C., II. (1990). Music, mood, and marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(4), 94. Retrieved January 13, 2010, from ABI/INFORM Global.
- Cassidy, T. (2005). Leisure, coping and health: The role of social, family, school and peer relationship factors. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, 33, 51-66.
- Compas, B. E., Connor-Smith, J. K., Saltzman, H., Thomsen, A. H., & Wadsworth, M. E. (2001). Coping with stress during childhood and adolescence: Problems, progress, and potential in theory and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 87-127.
- Dixon, S. K., & Robinson Kurpius, S. E. (2008). Depression and college stress among university undergraduates: Do mattering and self-esteem make a difference? *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(5), 412-24.

- Eccles, J. S., & Templeton, J. (2002). Extracurricular and other after-school activities for youth. *Review of Research in Education, 26*, 113-80.
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2004). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55*, 745-74.
- Frydenberg, E. (2004). Coping competencies: What to teach and when. *Theory Into Practice, 43*, 14-22.
- Frydenberg, E., & Lewis, R. (1993). Boys play sport and girls turn to others: Age, gender and ethnicity as determinants of coping. *Journal of Adolescents, 16*, 253-266.
- Good, M., Picot, B. L., Salem, S. G., Chin, C., Picot, S. F., & Lane, D. (2000). Cultural differences in music chosen for pain relief. *Journal of Holistic Nursing, 18*(3), 245-260.
- Gruenwedel, E. (2008, April). Report: Music sales 40% online by 2012. *Home Media Magazine, 30*(15), 16.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82.
- Harlow, T. (2008, Sept. 5). Radio beats CD and MP3s when it comes to music listening, survey finds. *Star Tribune*. Retrieved November 5, 2008, from <http://www.startribune.com/local/27914604.html>
- Holtzhausen, T., & Strydom, J. (2006). Generation Y consumers: Behavioural patterns of selected South African students. *The Business Review, Cambridge, 5*(1), 314-318.
- Hutchinson, S. L., Baldwin, C. K., & Oh, S. (2006). Adolescent coping: Exploring adolescents' leisure-based responses to stress. *Leisure Sciences, 28*, 115-131.

- Hutchinson, S. L., Bland, A. D., & Kleiber, D. A. (2008). Leisure and stress-coping: Implications for therapeutic recreation practice. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal, 42*(1), 9-23.
- Iwamoto, D. K., Creswell, J., & Caldwell, L. (2007). Feeling the beat: The meaning of rap music for ethnically diverse Midwestern college students- A phenomenological study. *Adolescence, 42*(166), 337-51.
- Iwasaki, Y. (2001). Contributions of leisure to coping with daily hassles in university students' lives. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 33*(2), 128-141.
- Iwasaki, Y. (2003). Examining rival models of leisure coping mechanisms. *Leisure Sciences, 25*, 183-206.
- Iwasaki, Y., MacKay, K., & Mactavish, J. (2005). Gender-based analyses of coping with stress among professional managers: Leisure coping and non-leisure coping. *Journal of Leisure Research, 37*(1), 1-28.
- Iwasaki, Y., & Mannell, R. C. (2000). Hierarchical dimensions of leisure stress coping. *Leisure Sciences, 22*(3), 163-181.
- Koen, B. D. (2006). Musical healing in Eastern Tajikstan: Transforming stress and depression through falak performance. *Asian Music, 37*(2), 58-83.
- Labbé, E., Schmidt, N., Babin, J., & Pharr, M. (2007). Coping with stress: The effectiveness of different types of music. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback, 32*(3-4), 163-8.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress appraisal and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Mason, H. (2004). Teens' leisure habits: TV on top. *The Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing, 93*. Retrieved February 9, 2009, from Research Library Core database.

- McCaffrey, R. (2008). Music listening: Its effects in creating a healing environment. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services, 46*(10), 39-44.
- McDermott, J. (2008). The evolution of music. *Nature, 453*(7193), 287-8.
- Nippold, M. A., Duthie, J. K., & Larsen, J. (2005). Literacy as a leisure activity: Free-time preferences of older children and young adolescents. *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools, 36*(2), 93-102.
- Panksepp, J. (1995). The emotional sources of “chills” induced by music. *Music Perception, 13*(2), 171-207.
- Reeher, J. C. (2007, April 11). Digital challenge cause of music sales decline. *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), A.13. Retrieved November 4, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database.
- Ross, S. E., Niebling, B. C., & Heckert, T. M. (1999). Sources of stress among college students. *College Student Journal, 33*(2), 312.
- Weisskirch, R. S., Murphy, L. C. (2004). Friends, porn, and punk: Sensation seeking in personal relationships, internet activities, and music preference among college students. *Adolescence, 39*(154), 189-201.

Appendix A

Participant Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Gender	Class-Standing Under= Freshman/Sophomore, Upper= Junior/Senior
Cory	Male	Upper
Brian	Male	Under
Will	Male	Under
Josh	Male	Under
Chris	Male	Upper
Jill	Female	Upper
Diana	Female	Under
Lisa	Female	Under
Amanda	Female	Upper
Kim	Female	Under
Gary	Male	Upper
Allison	Female	Under
Lily	Female	Upper
Patrick	Male	Under
Andrew	Male	Under
Max	Male	Under
Theresa	Female	Upper
Christy	Female	Upper
Katie	Female	Under
Jenn	Female	Under
Sarah	Female	Under
Ben	Male	Upper
Kristin	Female	Under
Dwayne	Male	Upper

Appendix B

Response Themes and Subcategories

1.)

Internal Factors: (n= 45)

07- Feeling of anxiety (8)

- Stress is when you have a feeling of anxiety -Will
- Stress is obviously anxiety –Josh
- anxiety just takes over completely and you just don't know what to do –Lisa
- stress would be an elevated of anxiety due to any number of things that are going on in a person's life –Gary
- like anxiety and feeling lots of tension that you don't like it's not a positive thing –Katie
- its like when your feeling a little more anxious than normal and your kind of just tense tensed up –Max
- I kind of relate it to anxiety -Dwayne
- Something that makes you anxious –Dwayne

08- Pressure (5)

- Pressure due to it could be due to multiple reasons –Will
- Pressure –Diana
- maybe responsibilities that you feel pressured by things like that –Lily
- a lot of stuff going on at the same time and you just feel the pressure –Ben
- I think stress is just when your under a lot of pressure to do things not like peer pressure things –Lisa

19- Ready to go crazy (4)

- you just don't know what to do really and you go crazy Lisa
- you're overwhelmed by something no matter how little, and you freak out, not always, but in some cases –Kim
- Stress to me is when you just feeling like your at the breaking point –Theresa
- freaked out –Kristin

02- Tension (4)

- tension –Cory
- Stress is tension –Chris
- your kind of just tense tensed up –Max
- and feeling lots of tension that you don't like –Katie

01- Uncomfortable (3)

- Stress I would say is uncomfortable –Chris
- uncomfortable –Lily
- your just very uncomfortable –Theresa

15- Worried (2)

- stress is like when you're worried about things –Kristin
- makes you worry about everything that has to happen at a certain period of time –Jill

22- An emotional feeling (2)

- I would say that stress is mostly an emotional feeling that people experience –Kim

- a whole bunch of emotions –Theresa

23- Uneasy (2)

- stress would be when your feeling uneasy –Allison

- I think you're just uneasy –Theresa

24- An abnormal feeling of chaos (2)

- just an abnormal feeling of like chaos –Allison

- stress to me is equivalent to like freaking out over just minor details or even big projects –Christy

03- Not good feeling (2)

- not good feeling –Cory

- how you feel when you think about those problems –Andrew

28- Agitated (1)

06- Mental (1)

25- Disconcerted (1)

11- Nervousness (1)

18- Don't know what to do (1)

21- Feel worse than you should (1)

10- Mind in two different places (1)

20- Negative work on the body (1)

05- Physical (1)

13- Tired (1)

14- Jittery (1)

External Factors: (n= 24)

12- Lots of stuff going on at once (10)

- stress I think of just having stuff going on at once –Jill

- experience mostly I would say when your overwhelmed by something no matter how little –Kim

- when you feel overwhelmed –Allison

- feeling that you get when you have too much to do –Patrick

- you have too big of a workload on you –Patrick

- when you have a lot of stuff on your plate –Theresa

- when your strung out –Jenn

- a lots on your mind and everything –Jenn

- when you have a lot of stuff going on at the same time –Ben

- a lot going on in your mind –Ben

09- Time crunch (5)

- I almost feel like I feel that it is a time crunch –Josh

- when your feeling rushed –Christy

- hurried –Christy

- I think it stress is compounded when you don't have a lot of time –Sarah

- you feel stressed that your not going to get everything done on time –Ben

16- Anything that affects your behavior in a negative way (2)

- I guess anything that affects your behavior in a negative way

- like it's not a positive thing –Katie

26- Trying to get too much done (2)

- your trying to get too much done –Patrick

- you have too much to do –Jenn

27- Focusing on problems in your life (1)

29- Harassed about doing things (1)

30- Comes from knowing you have something to do (1)

04- Anything that throws you off your norm (1)

17- Anything that affects your daily living in a distracting way (1)

2.)

Yes/Consistently: (n=24)

01- Yes (15)

02- Sure, a little (2)

09- With exams and work (2)

11- Daily (1)

12- Definitely (1)

06- Consistently (1)

10- Put stress on myself (1)

05- Good stress (1)

Not daily/Mild: (n=8)

07- Not daily (3)

03- Not severe stress (2)

04- Mild forms of stress (2)

08- Don't always feel really stressed (1)

3.)

School/Work: (n=65)

17- Doing homework constantly (16)

- doing homework constantly –Josh

- homework –Chris

- like getting homework done in time –Diana

- then I will have homework on top of it, that all needs to get done the next day –Lisa

- I get stressed out a lot about school work –Kim

- Well I think with being in college, along with everybody else here school work is a big factor in stress –Gary

- of course school work is a big deal –Allison

- other responsibilities that I did, like photo journalism projects –Lily

- I usually have a lot of reading to do so I have to get through pages and pages of

reading –Patrick

- when you get assignments, homework, for me personally, I know when I want to get homework and stuff done ughm, like I feel a little like petrified and feel a little tense inside but, I don't get too overstressed –Max
- when I have a lot of homework Theresa
- schoolwork –Christy
- My stress is always about schoolwork –Katie
- homework –Katie
- I think with school work mostly –Jenn
- like school work I get stressed out –Kristin

02- School (10)

- Usually it's school, right now it's just school, anything else is to, to me right now nothing really too big –Cory
- academic stress to deal with –Chris
- Stress usually comes for me from like school related activities –Jill
- Ugh, like first of all, school –Diana
- It is mostly about school –Kim
- School related yeah, I don't have much other stress –Patrick
- Ughm, yeah, with school and stuff, there is usually stress –Andrew
- basically school is like the intense stress –Sarah
- school –Ben
- at school when you've got papers and exams and stuff –Dwayne

18- Studying for exams (9)

- studying for exams –Josh
- mid terms –Chris
- if I have a lot of tests in the same week –Jill
- whole bunch of tests and stuff –Diana
- I just think how like exams all come at one time ugh, so, I feel really stress, what one do I study for most, and how much time do I have to dedicate to it and usually there's multiple exams –Lisa
- exams... I get really worked up when I have anything to study for –Amanda
- testing –Kim
- trying to get everything done that I put off until the last minute like for exams and everything –Theresa
- tests –Katie

09- Different assignments to do (7)

- different assignments to do –Brian
- I actually had to work on a paper that's due Monday –Brian
- remembering all of the little things that you need to do –Diana
- I have so much to do right now –Amanda
- when you get assignments –Max
- knowing you have something to do regardless of whether it is a big assignment or a little assignment –Sarah

- papers –Dwayne

08- Deadlines (5)

- deadlines –Brian
- a lot of deadlines to meet –Gary
- just like being punctual –Allison
- I guess a little bit like when you get deadlines and stuff like that –Max
- getting things done on time –Christy

04- Your job (4)

- your job –Cory
- a job –Cory
- I am also studying abroad in the spring I tried to keep a job to save up for that but, that didn't work out cause my job was at 6:30 in the morning –Lily
- at home when you're working on something –Dwayne

16- Work a lot (4)

- I work a lot, I work about 30 hours a week –Josh
- a lot of work to do, there is always stress involved with your work –Gary
- then I have work to do on top of that, almost like it doesn't end –Patrick
- there's a lot of work to be done –Jenn

01- Classes (3)

- Just with overloading of classes –Cory
- classes involve a lot of stress –Cory
- my classes and all that stuff –Lily

03- Thinking about your future (2)

- stress and thinking about your future –Cory
- what are you going to do with your future –Cory

05- Get into this certain grad school (1)

06- Internships (1)

07- Getting my resumé finished (1)

26- Grades (1)

15- Can't get the work done I wanted to get done (1)

Personal/Relational: (n=34)

22- Friendships (6)

- it can also come from friendships –Jill
- friends are something like that cause a lot of stress –Amanda
- friends that have problems –Christy
- Sometimes stuff with like my friends from home because sometimes they're really lame –Katie
- friends –Ben

- sometimes social stuff like friends you know, everyone has like stressful situations some times –Kristin

29- Family stress (4)

- Family stress like I have people going through things –Kim
- family problems –Christy
- at home like family stress that sort of thing, you know. I get along with my family pretty well but again there are always times when there is tension –Jenn
- family –Ben

28- Keeping everything balanced (3)

- just like keeping everything balanced all the time –Kim
- make sure that I get back on course with my schoolwork and activities that go with that –Christy
- when I have a lot on my plate at once –Kristin

30- Meet expectations (3)

- a lot of expectations –Gary
- you'll get things done, if not to class specifications, then to mine –Christy
- well personally I am like a perfectionist so, it takes me I think a little bit longer than most to do a simple assignment –Sarah

19- Maintain a social life (3)

- trying to ughm cope with all that and still maintain a social life –Josh
- I guess like anything that is social situations –Andrew
- sometimes social stuff –Kristin

27- Deaths in the family (2)

- deaths in the family –Amanda
- like my boyfriend just had a death in the family , so that was pretty stressful like as far as you know worrying about him and wondering if he's okay –Kim

38- Procrastinate (2)

- I usually tend to procrastinate and then at midnight I am going to the computer lab trying to get it all done until 3 am –Theresa
- stressful trying to get everything done that I put off until the last minute –Theresa

24- Tension (1)

21- Soreness from working out/living stress (1)

40- Feuds (1)

32- Making sure I don't interfere with someone's schedule (1)

36- Networking between people (1)

10- People annoying (1)

11- Message from the ex-girlfriend (1)

13- A relationship with somebody (1)

23- Bad roommate situation (1)

- 31- Girls (1)
- 20- Emotional (1)

Events/Planning: (n=21)

- 12- Upcoming event (5)
 - an upcoming event –Will
 - I do club cross country so like stressing about that with like races and stuff –Diana
 - if there's like ughm, some big event that I am like anticipating or something like that –Max
 - I used to run cross country and then from I would get kind of anxious before meets –Max
 - I have like stress for longer periods of time or if I have something big coming up, I really get nervous about it –Ben

35- Extracurricular activities (4)

- I have been involved with and a lot of extracurricular and other responsibilities that I did –Lily
- different extracurricular activities I am in –Christy
- I try to be involved –Sarah
- activities –Ben

25- How much time to dedicate (4)

- how much time do I have to dedicate to it –Lisa
- I am very organized, I like time management –Christy
- it takes me I think a little bit longer the most to do a simple assignment –Sarah
- rushed –Sarah

33- Scheduling (3)

- Scheduling –Allison
- making sure that everything is happening at the right time –Allison
- I kind of like get paranoid trying to organize things –Kristin

14- Have an agenda and then things come up (2)

- I feel like I have an agenda and then things come up –Will
- I feel like I am running in different directions all the time –Sarah

39- Once I get everything done it's relieved (1)

34- Poor time management (1)

37- Anything (1)

4.)

Activities: (n=77)

23- Listen to music (14)

- I do listen to music like a lot so, I would say that that is a huge factor, that is one thing that I do, you deal with stress in different kinds of music –Josh

- listen to music –Chris
- sometimes I listen to music –Diana
- listen to some music –Kim
- I always listen to music going to classes also, I think it helps –Allison
- sometimes music, calming music that would help –Lily
- music is huge for me, I play music, and I listen to a lot of music while I do work –Patrick
- listen to music –Andrew
- listen to music or something –Max
- I also like to turn on some calming music –Theresa
- listen to my Ipod a lot while going from place to place so, I feel like that calms me down as I relate well to the music –Christy
- listening to music –Ben
- I do listen to music when I am stressed –Kristin
- listen to music –Dwayne

41- Work out (6)

- if I would have the time my number one stress reliever is to go have a good work out it usually makes it so that I can avoid being stressed in the first place –Gary
- sometimes I like to exercise –Andrew
- I work out a lot more, when like I am stressed cause it helps me to sleep more –Katie
- working out –Jenn
- if I can spare a little bit of time I go to the gym –Sarah
- exercising –Ben

33- Talk about it/vent (5)

- I vent to my roommate –Diana
- I vent to my mom laugh, all the time and my boyfriend a lot –Lisa
- call other friends or my Mom’s, talk through everything –Amanda
- talk to people –Theresa
- I talk to my friends about it I tell them if it is something that I can talk to someone about –Katie

32- Make lists (4)

- I think making lists, just because that helps so that I can actually see in front of me what I have to do –Diana
- I will try to divide everything up evenly –Lisa
- sort of like list my priorities –Lisa
- I basically try to write things down on a list, to make sure that I have a plan on what I am going to do so that I feel like I have accomplished something –Christy

35- Take breaks (4)

- Taking breaks –Amanda
- breaks –Patrick
- take breaks when I am studying –Theresa
- take a little break from schoolwork –Sarah

04- Going for a run (3)

- running –Cory
- I run a lot more when I get stressed out. Running really releases one of the pent up energy –Jill
- sometimes maybe I will go for a run or something –Max

14- Doing my own stuff (3)

- doing my own stuff –Brian
- get some alone time –Ben
- I try to relax too, like ten minutes to myself to try to forget about everything –Kristin

17- Watching a movie (3)

- generally like watching a movie –Brian
- generally like watching a movie –Kim
- Watch something funny, like a funny movie –Dwayne

36- Go on Facebook (3)

- go on Facebook –Amanda
- I go right to youtube and type in my good songs that I like to listen to –Amanda
- go like on the computer –Kim

52- Watch TV (3)

- watch TV –Patrick
- watch some tv shows –Max
- I would just watch tv and stuff –Ben

53- Take a nap (2)

- take a nap –Andrew
- taking a nap –Ben

07- Eating (2)

- eating, I will go get a bite to eat, something like that –Cory
- by usually eating copious amounts of chocolate –Jill

25- Singing (2)

- singing, I am in an a-capella group so that's definitely a way of getting rid of stress –Chris
- singing, I just kind of do that unconsciously, while I work –Christy

09- Go to a ballgame (2)

- go to a ballgame –Cory
- a sporting event –Cory

27- Friendships (2)

- with like friendships and stuff –Jill

- hanging out with friends –Amanda

45- Actively getting involved (2)

- actively getting involved in something else –Allison

- I usually prefer being active like doing something about it right away –Christy

05- Going for a lift (1)

16- The things that I enjoy (1)

18- Staying home on the couch (1)

15- Yoga (1)

24- Reading (1)

31- Swim (1)

34- Drink coffee (1)

42- An outlet (1)

43- Take a walk (1)

47- Drink cider/tea/hot things (1)

50- Play music (1)

51- Play videogames (1)

55- Ride horses (1)

08- Going out for the weekends to relax (1)

10- Any type of event (1)

37- Sporting event (1)

40- Party (1)

Mental Adjustments: (n=29)

13- Relaxing (7)

- doing the kinds of things that you find relaxing –Brian

- just relaxing –Brian

- just relax and then go back and do it –Amanda

- relax –Kim

- maybe just relax –Andrew

- I will just relax –Max

- I try to relax –Kristin

22- Dealing with it (5)

- I usually can go along with it –Josh

- I deal with it –Josh

- Usually, I just take it head on –Max

- I just do whatever I'm doing and then hopefully it goes away –Max

- try to buckle down and get stuff done –Sarah

57- Putting everything into perspective (4)

- look at the whole situation –Kristin

- put everything into perspective –Dwayne

- makes you realize that what you're stressed out about really isn't as big of a deal as you think it is –Dwayne

- looking at the big picture –Dwayne

06- Off topic (3)

- get my mind off that subject –Cory
- I try not to think about it too much –Max
- , try not to think about it too much mostly, too much worrying about it can be worse than the initial stress to begin with –Brian

19- Thinking about it (3)

- I usually think about it for a little bit –Will
- I internalize on it –Josh
- take some time to think about everything –Ben

20- Come to terms with it (2)

- I just come to terms with it –Will
- there is tomorrow –Will

11- Taking a moment to really breathe (2)

- taking a moment to really breathe –Brian
- I try to settle myself down –Kristin

12- Put a little confidence in yourself (1)

38- Unwind (1)

49- Rationalize things (1)

Alteration/Removal: (n=27)

29- Remove myself from the situation (8)

- I just try to wait until I am not angry or super stressed out and come back to the situation –Jill
- I usually just like step away from it for a minute –Kim
- have me time –Kim
- I stop everything –Kim
- remove yourself from it –Allison
- for me going to the barns kind of like an escape –Jenn
- away from everything else –Ben
- I try to take a step back from it –Dwayne

28- Plan/Organize (4)

- plan out –Jill
- I try to organize myself –Allison
- make sure that I have a plan on what I am going to do so that I feel like I have accomplished something –Christy
- divide it up what I need to get done –Kristin

01- Take one at a time (3)

- usually I take one at a time –Cory

- it's bad to think about it all at once –Cory
- take things one step at a time –Kristin

21- Modify my routine (2)

- I just modify my routine –Will
- doing something about it right away as opposed to just like putting it off and keep on worrying about it –Christy

02- Do a different activity (1)

03- Doing another subject (1)

26- Manage my time (1)

30- Wait until I'm not stressed out (1)

39- Stay occupied (1)

44- Get yourself out of your little bubble (1)

48- Find a good place to concentrate (1)

56- Get stuff done in advance (1)

54- Procrastinate more (1)

46- Distraction (1)

4b.)

Removal: (n=19)

01- Gets my mind off what I am thinking about (9)

- it just gets my mind off of what I am thinking about –Cory
- I think it mentally takes your mind off the stress –Chris
- I guess I am stressed out if I think about it a lot, so if I do those things, I don't think about it as much. So, if I am not doing the work I am not thinking about it which makes me less stressed –Patrick
- I think it gets your mind off things –Andrew
- it just gets your mind off of whatever is stressing you out –Max
- giving your brain a rest –Theresa
- its just something else to focus on –Christy
- get my mind off everything else –Ben
- Takes your mind off of it –Dwayne

10- Gets you away (5)

- just getting away from that –Amanda
- its kind of an escape from your mind and everyday annoyances –Jenn
- it is an escape a little bit –Jenn
- just to get out of my room and the library, away from the books just to kind of remove yourself –Sarah
- It kind of takes you into a different world for a little while –Dwayne

09- Gets it off my chest (3)

- getting it off of my chest –Diana
- you just are able to get everything that you're feeling off your chest –Lisa
- [can't] hold it in because as I just get more and more angry –Katie

16- Get it done and over with (1)

11- It is a counter (1)

Relax/Release: (n=14)

07- Release pent up energy/emotions (8)

- release of any negative emotions –Lisa

- Running really releases a lot of that pent up energy –Jill

- it gives you physical relief –Andrew

- gets rid of aggression –Jenn

- when I get stressed out I just feel like nervous energy so if I go to the gym I can expend that energy –Sarah

- you kind of like, you can take your frustration out –Ben

- it gives you a chance to just relieve your feelings –Theresa

- it's like a release –Katie

02- Relaxation (5)

- it's relaxing –Cory

- relaxing –Chris

- be relaxed –Lily

- I think that it calms you down obviously –Andrew

- it's relaxing –Jenn

13- More comforting environment (1)

Personal Enjoyment: (n=11)

04- It is a good stressor (2)

- I think it is a good stressor –Cory

- a good stressor to build upon –Cory

05- Enjoyable (2)

- it's enjoyable –Chris

- can help you better about the whole situation –Theresa

06- Gets everything out (2)

- it is just like physical, getting everything out –Chris

- it helps you to take your anger out –Andrew

17- Relate really well to the lyrics (1)

03- It is a different stressor (1)

08- Allows me to see what I have to do (1)

12- Focus on what you're doing (1)

14- Allows me to connect with others (1)

5a.)

Mental/Physical Improvement: (n=31)

09- Calms me down (11)

- it calms me down –Diana
- Like if you really want to calm down –Allison
- makes me calmer –Lily
- it just helps me relax –Lily
- like calming music and I feel that it helps me settle down –Theresa
- then I can just listen to music, kind of relax –Christy
- I think its relaxing –Ben
- calming –Ben
- mentally helps you, like calms yourself down –Kristin
- calm down –Kristin
- if it's the right kind of music it's relaxing –Dwayne

12- Think of good memories (4)

- I will listen to a song that reminds me of somebody in my family or something like that, I will listen to that as it will make me feel better –Diana
- Sometimes like if you think of good memories, you can get happy again –Kim
- different connections, like your past, your future –Kim
- to remind me of happy times –Theresa

19- Great to get lost in it (3)

- Its just great to listen to like music and get lost in it –Max
- it kind of takes you away from reality a little bit –Max
- a nice outlet –Christy

17- Change the way you feel (2)

- music can help like change the way you feel about other things –Andrew
- happy music can like change your emotions –Andrew

07- Does make me feel better (2)

- it does make me feel better –Josh
- it soothes my stress –Theresa

08- Can choose music based on mood (2)

- There are different moods –Josh
- Music is a good way to like kind of express like your stress and your anxiety –Kristin

10- Release (2)

- release emotion –Kim
- takes it away –Theresa

14- Get hyped up (1)

15- Something to occupy part of your mind (1)

18- Happy music= you can't help but be happy (1)

- 21- Erases things in my head (1)
- 22- Remind yourself it's going to be fine/ can handle it (1)

The Music Itself: (n=21)

- 16- Think about the music rather than the work (5)
 - I can't describe the feeling, you know, it's something to occupy you know, part of your mind instead of just silence and work –Patrick
 - it takes your mind off of it, what's stressing you out –Max
 - kind of makes me not keep me in my mind thinking of all the things that I have to do –Christy
 - I can just listen to music kind of relax that way and not constantly to have to think about okay –Christy
 - Takes my mind off it –Dwayne

- 05- The meaning behind it (3)
 - the meaning behind it –Josh
 - if you can find a song that you can relate to –Kristin
 - if I can identify with a song then I can like kind of feel better –Kristin

- 06- Someone is conveying a message (3)
 - someone is conveying a message –Josh
 - I think that the reason that we listen to music is because of the message that each artist can like convey to me –Josh
 - the lyrics –Kristin

- 04- The sound (2)
 - the sound –Josh
 - the melodies and the beat to a certain song, it can help mellow you out –Kristin

- 20- You can do it while you work (2)
 - you can do it while you work too if you want to –Christy
 - have music on, not too loud, just kind of like in the background –Ben

- 01- Listening to the person (1)
- 02- Everything from the music (1)
- 03- The instruments themselves (1)
- 11- Entertaining (1)
- 13- Just like to listen (1)
- 23- More effective than TV or movies (1)

5b.)

Very Often/Daily: (n=9)

- 02- On a daily basis at least a couple hours (4)
- 03- All the time (2)
- 10- A big part of my life (2)

01- Very often (1)

Not Often: (n=6)

04- Not much (3)

06- At home when I'm in a fight with my boyfriend (1)

07- Only on weekends (1)

11- Not when I do work or study (1)

Sometimes: (n=4)

08- Randomly (1)

09- An hour during the week (1)

05- Three times a week for an hour or two (1)

12- Love listening to music when I'm just hanging out (1)

5c.)

Yes: (n=6)

06- Sure (3)

01- I could say so (2)

10- Yes, sometimes (1)

No: (n=5)

09- Not really (3)

11- Only when I'm in a fight with my boyfriend (1)

14- Not with schoolwork (1)

The Music Itself: (n=7)

08- If the lyrics are something I can relate to that helps out (4)

- if the lyrics are something that I can relate to that helps out –Brian

- it relates to your life in different ways –Jenn

- the lyrics –Jenn

- I think that you can certainly relate to just about anything in music –Jenn

12- Use it like in meditation (1)

03- Whatever they are talking about will be completely different than what you are talking about (1)

15- The melodies (1)

Mental/Physical Improvement: (n=6)

02- Takes you away (2)

- it almost takes you away to another place –Cory

- It puts me off away –Brian

04- Puts you behind the situation (1)

05- Gets you away from reality a little bit (1)

07- To distract myself in a way (1)

13- Music can match any type of emotion that you have (1)

5d.)

Yes/Sometimes: (n=11)

- 06- Yes (3)
- 01- With some people (2)
- 02- If I am in a certain mood (1)
- 04- Definitely (1)
- 07- When I need to chill (1)
- 08- Angry music= Makes me more angry (1)
- 09- Pump up CD during sports warm-ups always works (1)
- 10- Girly songs get you excited before going out (1)

No: (n=2)

- 03- If I am in the mindset of getting something done, I don't like to listen to music (1)
- 05- No (1)

6.)

All Responses: (n=56)

- 06- Mellow (10)
- 15- I listen to it all (6)
- 10- Lyrics that calm me down (5)
- 07- Rock and roll (4)
- 01- Rap (3)
- 08- Slower (3)
- 12- Country (3)
- 16- Classical (2)
- 17- Jazz (2)
- 25- Alternative (2)
- 23- My iTunes and iPod (1)
- 20- It depends (1)
- 14- Busy stress= Varies/Listening music (1)
- 11- Working out= faster music (1)
- 13- Stuff you can dance to (1)
- 05- Hopeless romantic (1)
- 09- Reminds me of something happier (1)
- 18- Crooner music (1)
- 19- 80's and 90's (1)
- 21- Acoustic things (1)
- 22- Blues (1)
- 24- Broadway musicals (1)
- 26- Nothing too loud or out there (1)
- 02- Heavy metal (1)
- 03- Really angry/stressed= heavy metal hard (1)
- 04- Angry= Something that is harder (1)

7.)

No: (n=11)

01- No (11)

Yes/Depends: (n=12)

03- Whatever the mood is (3)

06- Yeah, definitely (3)

20- Whatever I'm into at the time (2)

02- Usually just random (1)

07- I have different genders? of music (1)

09- What I can relate to (1)

22- It does depending on how stressed (1)

Equal to: (n=17)

08- Angry= something angry, something hard (4)

14- Sad= Sad songs (3)

05- Lightly stressed out= techno stuff or instrumental things (2)

04- Really stressed out= heavy music (1)

10- Happy mood= dancing to pop music (1)

15- Want to get away= upbeat, fun (1)

16- Personal/boyfriend stress= something more romantic that reminds me of him (1)

17- School stress= rap (1)

18- Test= music that pumps you up (1)

19- Inner-feminine side= Old school Whitney Houston (1)

21- Really stressed/Running= Rap/Hardcore (1)

23- Low stress= low music in the background (1)

24- Really stressed= listen to just music without doing anything else (1)

Not equal to: (n=2)

11- Angry ≠ pop star (1)

12- Happy ≠ dark heavy metal (1)

8.)

Increased control/Realization: (n=23)

14- More in control (5)

- more in control of the situation –Jill

- - Like after you I don't know realize that, you know, like maybe you have it more under control... I think maybe your problems are a little bit more manageable –Andrew

- I feel like more resolved –Katie

- you think like, okay, I am going to be fine I can tackle this, like, its okay –Kristin

- keeps me from hitting the panic button –Dwayne

24- More ready to continue with the situation (5)

- Just makes me more ready to continue on with whatever the situation maybe –Theresa
- it will help me just continue and get it done with –Theresa
- think of like a game plan of how I'm going to tackle whatever the problem is –Katie
- empowered –Kristin
- makes it seem less overwhelming –Dwayne

08- It just defocuses me (3)

- it just defocuses me from the stress –Josh
- it gets my mind off everything –Amanda
- it just kind of makes me think about something else –Christy

06- Helps me think (2)

09- Sufficient afterwards (2)

15- Time to sort it out (2)

17- Sometimes it can help you if you're focused (1)

27- Nice knowing there's somebody else that can relate to you (1)

28- Gives me a new perspective (1)

Good/Better: (n=20)

11- Better (4)

- Definitely a lot better –Chris
- generally, I feel better –Diana
- I feel better actually –Christy
- Usually, I feel better- Ben

01- I feel pretty good (4)

- I feel pretty good –Cory
- I feel good –Amanda
- it's good –Patrick

10- Good, but bummed that I have to get back to work (1)

12- Pumped up (3)

- sometimes its kind of an elated sort of feeling afterwards –Jenn
- some songs just give you that boost of energy –Kristin
- Pumped about my day (1)

21 Reduces Stress (3)

It wipes some of the stress away for a while (1)

- it usually like, diminishes it –Ben
- it seems to always reduce my stress level –Ben

03- Almost adds a little more ab? to your day (1)

04- Kind of like a stay over? (1)

20- Most of the time feel a little bit better if the right type of music (1)

- I think that motivates me –Diana

Relaxed/Refreshed/Calm: (n=19)

13- More relaxed (6)

- More relaxed –Jill
- I definitely feel more relaxed –Max
- I would say you feel more relaxed –Jenn
- I feel like it relaxes me and stuff –Ben
- I feel like relaxed –Kristin
- Feel relaxed –Dwayne

05- Good way to calm myself down for the moment (5)

- music is a good way to kind of calm myself down for the moment –Brian
- music does calm me down –Brian
- feel more calm –Jill
- I feel more comforted –Katie
- Calms me down –Dwayne

22- Refreshed (4)

- it's kind of like you're refreshed –Patrick
- you can come back and start over again –Patrick
- I kind of feel like I have a fresh start –Max
- a clean slate –Max

It helps (3)

- it helps –Katie
- I just feel relief –Kristin
- I think most of the time it helps –Lily

07- It settles it most of the time (3)

- I feel like it settles it most of the time –Josh
- it settles your mind –Chris

18- Lighten your mood (1)

Other: (n=6)

- 19- Sometimes worse if the wrong song (2)
- 25- Go into the music and the song (2)
- 16- Lyrics have purpose/ life lessons (1)
- 26- Still stressed in general (1)

Appendix C
Informed Consent Form

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Music listening as a coping mechanism for college students

Principal Investigator: Sam Thompson
107 Beaver Hall, University Park, PA 16802
(908) 268-9878
sht5007@psu.edu

Advisor: Deborah Kerstetter
801 Ford Building, University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-8988
debk@psu.edu

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to address how students use music as a strategy for coping with stress.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to respond to a series of question during a 30-minute interview. The entire interview will be recorded. However, no identifying information (i.e., name, Penn State ID number) will be disclosed during the tape-recorded interview or in the final results of the study.
- 3. Duration/Time:** The interview should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.
- 4. Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured in Dr. Deborah Kerstetter's office (i.e., 801 Ford Building). It will be destroyed in 2010, after the completion of Sam Thompson's thesis. Prior to that data, the information will be saved on Dr. Kerstetter's computer, which is password protected. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

A code number will be attached to each interview to ensure confidentiality. Access to the data will be limited to Sam Thompson, Deb Kerstetter and the transcriptionist.

- 5. Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Sam Thompson or Deb Kerstetter with questions or concerns about this study.
- 6. Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study.

Participation in the interview is considered your implied consent to participate in this study. Please keep this form for your records.

ACADEMIC VITA
Samuel H. Thompson
233 Flocktown Road
Long Valley, NJ 07853

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park , PA
B.S. in Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, May 2010
Honors: Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, Minor: Business

EXPERIENCE

- Jan – Apr 2010 **Centre Region Parks and Recreation**, State College, PA
Intern
Coordinated programs and special events, organized documents, managed inventory and communications, and facilitated implementation of inventory database.
- Jun – Aug 2009 **JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa**, Phoenix, AZ
Intern
Monitored and provided assistance to coworkers, tended to guests' inquiries, and maintained the resort's professional image.
- Jun – Aug 2008 **Musconetcong Valley Community Assoc**, Long Valley, NJ
Backyard Swim Instructor
Planned and coordinated lesson plans, and provided individualized instruction to 12 groups of 1 to 6 children.

HONORS

- 2006 – 2010 Dean's List
2007 – 2010 Member, Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society
2007 – 2010 Member, National Society of Collegiate Scholars
2006 Inducted as an Eagle Scout

ACTIVITIES

- 2007 – 2010 Treasurer, HAC: Helping Across the Community
2006 – 2010 Member, Blue and White Society
2006 – 2009 Member, Penn State Ski Club

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- May – Jun 2010 American Universities International Programs: New Zealand
2003 – 2005 American Council of International Studies: England, Russia, Italy