

**Music's Effect on Individual and Group Memories**

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## **Abstract**

Music has become increasingly prevalent in media, its exposure nearly impossible to avoid with the internet, mobile access to music at all times and digital downloads. Those who were raised in the 90s generation experienced the first wave of music becoming increasingly digital and easily portable. The purpose of the research is to understand how popular music acts as a trigger for memory recall and if a shared memory of music affects the way, we interact with others. These were the research questions of this study: RQ1: Does music trigger certain memories based on specific songs during their pre-teen years? RQ2: Can music create a shared bond within a group based on similar themes found in the shared memories? Three focus groups were conducted, with 26 participants in total, 19 females, and 7 males. Several clips of pop songs of the 90s were played, and discussion questions about each song were asked. It was found that many of the participants experienced similar memory recall and peers were the main influence of music choice. Music also acted as a symbol among the group that everyone associated meaning to, allowing the group to feel a sense of community.

## Introduction

Music has always been a major part of culture, dating back to the first civilizations. The role music has played in culture has no limits. It has been used for ceremonies, some of tradition, celebrations, a way of remembrance and mourning. It has been a tool and vehicle for expression of the mind and soul through not only instruments and sounds, but also through the words that accompany it. It has been proven through various studies of psychological research, that music acts a trigger for memories (Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007). What is interesting, is understanding what happens after these memories are triggered. What emotions or feelings are provoked and how we channel them in group settings. The purpose of this study will be to discover if music, from our pre-teen years, acts as a trigger for memory recall and if it has shaped our perception of ourselves.

Music has played an important role in my life personally, I have always been fascinated by the power it has in many people's lives. As I got older, I began realizing I was naming playlists after certain times of the year. This was a significant discovery to me, I had named a group of songs after a specific time in my life and when listening to it I was instantly taken back to those memories. I then wanted to understand why I was able to instantly go back to specific memories and if this was a trend among other individuals. I wanted to understand how music shapes how we communicate with each other based on a shared memory and how it has shaped our identity through culture.

Music, whether it is used in advertisements or in other forms of media like television, internet or radio, has a great influence on consumers. Each decade has its own defining style of music. The 70s had disco and The Bee Gees and bellbottoms. The 80s had neon legwarmers, big hair and songs like "Video Killed the Radio Star." The 90s had synchronized choreographed

boy bands, punk rock and songs like “Bye, Bye, Bye.” In one online article, “Themes from popular movies and other addictive jingles reveal a bit about how music affects us.” (May, 2008). Music most always will trigger some sort of memory, especially if it falls under “pop” music because it has a lot of media exposure whether it is through television, and/or radio. “For people of all ages, this is clearly the case, at least at an anecdotal level,” said Petr Janata, an expert in the psychology of music at the University of California, Davis (May, 2008). This study will specifically be looking at symbolic interactionism in helping define the internal meaning we create within ourselves and a song, based on the amount of influence music has had. The idea of music creating a connection is also a part of this phenomenon. It usually takes place in group settings, usually in a social setting. It is important to understand the amount of influence music related media text has on the younger generation.

The media has become a driving force in music's exposure to the masses. Since music has become so accessible through various forms of media in the last 50 years, there is a wide range of possible memories associated with music. “Popular music is arguably one of the most polarizing forms of mass communication,” (Allan, 2006). This research will provide more insight into how people act towards certain things and how we attach different meanings to those people, objects or ideas. It is important to understand the communication we have with ourselves. This type of interpersonal communication gives insight into how culturally we create meaning through music, and how it has influenced our memories over time, possibly shaping our perception of ourselves.

This study will specifically focus on how music, because of its high exposure in various forms of media, has served as a channel to memory recall because we are actively creating these memories. Our internal communication with ourselves has become a part of this process.

## Research Gap

There has not been much research completed that ties in music in various forms of mass media and its effects on our memory and our identity. Allan found ads that used popular music were remembered easier, especially ones with words (2006). Carpentier found that complex music makes it easier for the audience to recall actual words in a news broadcast (2010). Janata, et al, discovered that people associate music and songs with specific social and cultural memories (2007). The music played a key role in a person's memory, but not many, if any at all, connect our internal communication to music. This research will help us to understand how music shapes how we communicate with each other based on a shared "fantasy" or memory.

Music has an effect on our memories and our identity through culture, it is very interesting that if a popular song from a generation is brought up in conversation, automatically every person can think of one vivid memory from that time of their life. Through these discussions and research, we can maybe find a better understanding of the role music has played in the current generation and future ones to come.

## Theoretical Grounding

Symbolic interactionism deals with internal communication within ourselves, and is how we associate meaning to different things. There are four important parts to symbolic interactionism; meaning, language, thought and self. I will be looking at how much meaning music carries with it, especially through language and how we sometimes identify our "self" with certain music (Griffin, 2009). The sub-categories of this theory include; minding, meaning, language, thought, self (looking-glass self) (Griffin, 2009). Minding (self-talk) is the dialogue we have with ourselves that prepares us for future actions and reactions before we act on situations (Griffin, 2009). An example of this would be if you were in a group setting and the subject of a

90s boy bands pops up into conversation, we wait to see how the others in the group are going to react, if it's a positive comment or negative, that's when we decide what memories we might want to reveal to the group. This is important in understanding possible themes that appear in the memories.

Language in this premise deals with meaning that comes from the social interaction we have with other people (Griffin, 2009). People use language and labels to identify characteristics about ourselves; through this we are able to create meaning. For example, in my study I would like to analyze how certain artists of "pop" music from the current college student's preteen years has meaning attached to it because it was a part of our social upbringing. Whether the songs are about love in the sense of head over heels in love, or even the end of love, the breakup, the language of love could change our perceptions. The popular music of that generation was a major part of growing up and socializing with friends. *Meaning* can be described as the way people will act towards others based off the meaning they have associated with those people, ideas or objects. We associate boy bands, which became popular in the 90s, with screaming 10-15 year-old girls.

Emotions also play a role in memory recall. This is where we'd take a look at *perceptual view of emotions*, which is when certain things gain meaning when we attach significance to them (Wood, 2010). For example, when we hear a certain song we attribute a certain emotion with it.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Psychological and biological evidence of memory recall**

Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski conducted psychological study in which the goal was to examine the music evoked memories and the amount of details that could be recalled. In the

study, researchers used a set of questionnaires that the participants were asked to fill out after listening to a number of songs chosen from Billboard's Top 100 Pop and R&B songs (Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007). The results of this research concluded that the popular songs did serve as stimuli for recalling specific memories. This study showed that specific brain lobes assist in memory recall.

Another psychological study investigated which part of the brain is linked to recalling memories with music acting as the stimuli. Questionnaires were also used after playing popular songs of a generation and they found that the dorsal medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) was activated when music that previously triggered emotions (Janata, 2009). These studies will assist in proving that music not only in pop culture helps with "social" memory recall but factual recall as well.

### **Media's influence based on the amount of exposure of popular music**

A study conducted by D. Allan took 111 (48% male, 52% female) Top 40 radio frequent listeners and played about 10 seconds of nearly 100 top billboard songs. They were also then showed brands from the Top 100 brands list in *BusinessWeek* and asked to rate both the brands and song on a scale of 1-10. The variables included advertising that used original popular song vocals, advertising that used alter popular song vocals, advertising that used the original popular song instrumental, and advertising that used no music at all. It was found that the use of popular (note, that it is popular music) paired with some type of ad, whether it be a television or radio ad, aided in the remembrance of that product (Allan, 2006). This research reinforces the power and influence music has on remembering certain times or moments in our lives.

One of the guiding factors in this research was to determine if the popular music that was being played had more personal significance would it create more attention than if the



significance was lower (Allan, 2006). In the study by Allan, he analyzed how the usage of popular music in advertising might trigger personal significance based on someone's memory of that song. This study examined the idea of uses and gratification and its link to the mass communication aspect. This researcher wanted to look at factors, such as whether or not the audience was active and if alternate communication sources played a role. Specifically, they examined if the needs turned into motives if then a person can make a knowledgeable decision based on what can gratify the need. What they found was that the group of participants who viewed the music video found that there was more meaning to the song because of the visual aid (Rubin, 1986).

Another media outlet that relies on music to create memory is radio news. Though my study is not necessarily looking at the news, it still proves the point that music is directly connected to our ability to create specific memories. Carpentier conducted a study in which they took a look at the effects that music had on audiences when included during anchor reading or on a radio broadcast. They wanted to see if the addition of music would have a positive effect on the reaction of the audience in regards to the ability to remember and enjoy of the newscast. The study took 144 participants from a communications undergraduate program that were in their third and fourth years. This study took college participants and had them listen to a news broadcast with background music and one without. The results proved that those who listened to the broadcast with music could recall more what was said in the broadcast. This proves music's power to assist in memory recall. These studies discussed how certain artists can also be significant on a personal level with some people, which is an interesting factor that is a cornerstone of this future research.

### **How music has created a cultural identity of ourselves**

The idea that music creates a sense of identity for many people is an important factor. Many people will associate our upbringing with a particular generation and music plays a large role in defining a generation. A study conducted in the Netherlands looked at creating memories that created a sense of belonging through similar cultural likings such as popular music. It deals with social memories that are created as well as “personal and collective cultural memory.” The author of the study uses cultural theory to analyze the collected data to correlate personal memory and collective memory. In this study, there was a Top 2000 and the top 2000 songs of popular music are played based on that country's heritage celebration, in other words, music festival. The study found that music creates a bond between people based on their love and shared memories of the same music. One study said, “Shared listening, exchanging (recorded) songs, and talking about music create a sense of belonging and connect a person's sense of self to a larger community and generation,” (Van Dijck, 2006).

Music is used in counseling practices, specifically with kids who face economic, cultural and social challenges according to an article written by Duffey & Haberstroh (2011). This periodical discusses how music can communicate cultural and personal experiences. These tie into the idea that music plays apart in symbolic convergence, people feel connected to this one “fantasy” or memory, and instantly feel like they belong. In the Rubin (1986) study it was researched how other social desires are attached to this “fantasy.” In this research it included statistics on MTV's influence on 12-34 year-olds. MTV has become a part of our culture, becoming a part of the many memories of adolescences. It's important to understand where this culture originated so that there is more “text” to examine when looking at other factors that make up the culture.

## Research Questions

After conducting background research on my topic of music and memories, I was able to formulate two research questions. There have been previous studies, mainly conducted through psychological research on if music can recall memories in general. I wanted to understand if specific/detailed memories were able to be recalled, and then further analyze any similar themes among the memories given from multiple participants. The following questions helped me determine what memories were triggered in regards to the emotion accompanied with it, as well as what type of connection was created through shared memories among a group of people.

*RQ1: Does music trigger certain memories based on specific songs during their pre-teen years?*

*RQ2: Can music create a shared bond within a group based on similar themes found in the shared memories?*

## Method

In my research I chose to study male and females between the ages of 18-23, college aged students at a small university in the southern east coast. These participants were in elementary school during the mid-90s, where the era of boy bands and pop stars really took off. The exchange of songs and a shared listening created a sense of belonging within the group (Van Dijck, 2006). My study was not focused on a specific gender and this was something I had not taken into account when specifying my demographics for qualified participants was how gender roles. Most of my participants were females and were able provide input on the topic. I noticed the males begin to struggle to find something to add to the discussion because much of the “Pop” scene was geared to young adolescent girls or younger. I would have specified my demographics to only females with the same age group. I then would have added research that

focused on what stereotype gender roles were conveyed during this time period of the 90s boy bands and girl power era.

I recruited my participants through various media sources including email and Facebook, as well as word of mouth on campus. Participants were also recruited from an introductory communication course. The qualifications for my participants were that they were required to send an e-mail verifying the participant's interest in the focus group and to be a student at the university between the ages of 18-23.

I conducted three focus groups interviews, with between 7-9 participants in each group. I had 19 females and 7 males with 26 participants in total. I chose three focus groups because it would be a larger sample and variety of responses to examine. I wanted to cap my number of participants at 10 because more than that could drastically change group dynamics. The more people in a group the more likely one person is to dominate the discussion while others just sit and listen. I capped the time of each focus group at 45 minutes to allow enough time for a thorough discussion. I used a digital recorder to assist me in taking notes on what went on during the focus group. This helped me so that I could observe the interaction among the group as well as facilitate the conversation instead of solely taking in depth-handwritten notes.

As a pre-requisite to the focus group, I asked each participant to bring in the title of a song that was one of their favorites during their pre-teen years. I loaded each song that was sent in and prepared a 30 second clip of it on Youtube. For each group, I played 5-6 songs to ensure that each participant recognized at least one of the songs [See Appendix B for list of songs]. I then played each clip and had a short 5-10 minute discussion on the memories the participants associated with each song. I was sure that each participant contributed something by asking them guiding questions, especially for those who were less adamant on speaking up on their own.

Another study used this type of interview protocol as well (Van Dijck, 2006). A series of clips of popular songs were played, but in this study, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire rather than discuss in a focus group.

I developed my interview questions through my own work as well as through consultation with a faculty research advisor. I also developed the interview questions through discussions with fellow researchers at the university. I began my focus groups with several introductory questions about music in general. These were meant to gain a better sense of the type of exposure the participants had to music growing up. A few examples of these questions included:

*Exposure:*

1. What type of music did you listen to when you were in elementary school?
2. Can you recall specific artists/bands?
3. Who was your favorite?
4. How and when were you first exposed to this artist/band?
5. Was your music choice influenced by anyone? Peers? Family? Friends

[See Appendix A for complete interview]

After the set of exposure questions, I played one song at a time, after which I would ask another series of questions, applying them to the song played. Following the completion of the discussion about the first song, I played several more songs asking the same set of questions. Finally, my focus group concluded with questions delving into the effects and meaning music has had on individuals.

One of the discrepancies of my study was that one of my participants took the discussion of music they listened to in elementary school, to music they listened to in middle school and high school. This was not the topic my discussion was geared towards, so it took several reminders for my second focus group that that was not the genre or time period music we were to be

discussing. My focus group did get off track for several minutes and I was unable to use any of that data for my findings section because of its irrelevance.

I was able to complete my data analysis by referring to and transcribing the discussions from my focus groups off a digital recorder. I transcribed the discussions on a Word document saved on a private file on my computer and then the records were destroyed after the research was complete. After transcribing my interviews, I was able to color code various answers that eventually led to the themes of my research. My codes were titled "Emotion and Memories," "Peer Influences," "Parental Influence," and "Typed of Media Exposure." I then consolidated my four codes into two themes. I read over the data, referred to my research questions, I kept track of the number of similarities in their responses and was able to finally create my two themes. One of my themes directly answered my first research question based on the obvious interview questions that correlated to it. My second research question was answered indirectly through observation and the coding of my participants responses.

### **Thematically Organized Findings**

Throughout this study of music and memories, it has become evident that music does act as a trigger for specific memories that may otherwise not be easily recalled. In this case, childhood memories were the ones that were targeted. The type of emotions and perceptions evoked from the childhood memories has led to two themes. These themes address not only the particular feelings that music has accompanied memories but also understanding who has the most influence on one's music choice. The themes discovered from the focus groups originated from my research questions:

*RQ1: Does music trigger certain memories based on specific songs during their pre-teen years?*

*RQ2: Can music create a shared bond within a group based on similar themes found in the shared memories?*

**I just remember all the good times; it's almost like a relapse**

Many can agree that music can evoke certain emotions that partner a memory, “just listening to a song can take many of us back to old sensations, excitements, fears and hopes,” as researched in Duffey&Haberstroh’s article (2011). This particular article discussed the ability music has to take people back to a specific place in time. After conducting my three focus groups of 24 participants in total, a vast majority of them claimed that the popular songs from their childhood triggered mainly happy memories. Participants were asked to submit some of their favorite songs they listened to while in elementary school. One of the male participants chose MC Hammers’ “U Can’t Touch This.” His comment was in response to this particular song. Joey said “Back when I was in band camp they had a talent competition and my friends and I decided to do that choreography to that song and we actually won that competition, so it brought back some memories from my childhood. Very good memories, a lot of fun memories”

Many of the other participants then began sharing their own stories of this choreographed dance genre that completely took over the 90s. Another male from that same focus group talked about how in present times they still knew the dance of \*NSYNC’s “Bye Bye Bye.” Jeffrey: “Third floor of the dorm we recreated a music video for this song.” Joey’s first comment about male choreographed dance acted as a trigger for Jeffrey’s, and both memories had similarities between them.

This sub-theme of learning the dances from favorite artists became apparent as a happy memory for some participants. Gabby: “I remember being in summer camp and listening to the Spice Girls and all my group, like each wanted to be a member. And dancing it out.” Many

participants admitted to learning these dance moves from various sources of media. The most frequent form brought up was MTV, and then more specifically the music videos. In one study, researcher examined the influence video accompanying a song would enhance or influence consumers. "By combining integrated and synchronized sights and sounds, music videos may produce an even more involving context of media use for the consumer," (Rubin, 1986). They specifically researched MTV, eventually producing statistics on the matter. "A Nielsen study, for example, claimed that MTV was more influential than radio in the record buying behavior of 12 to 34 year olds; 63% of the respondents rated MTV as an important factor in their decision to buy a record, while 59% said that radio was their prime motivator," (Rubin, 1986). Many of the participants claimed that they were greatly influenced by what they saw on television.

My second focus group, the willingness to share these music evoked childhood memories was much greater. This group of participants was much livelier. While playing the 30 second clips of the songs many of them would sing the lyrics and began dancing in their seats. One participant who went by the name of Maria commented on her memories of "Tearin' up my Heart" by the Backstreet Boys. Maria: "I've only experienced happy things with it. Like growing up listening to this, listening to the music of Backstreet Boys and \*NSYNC, I would blast it so it drowned out anything else yanno." Many of the other participants of this group also reiterated positive feelings towards these memories. I had only one participant out of 24 that had a not so favorable memory about one particular song.

This theme confirms that many people's perceptions of their childhood when paired with music are generally happy memories. Nostalgia has become a large part of the good feelings people admitted to having.



### **Peers or Parents: Your Identity**

“Particular others are specific people who are significant to us.”(Wood, 2010). This is the first perspective that affects us, as we grow up our particular, others will change. These change from solely family member (parents) or caregivers to teachers, friends, peers to eventually partners and co-workers. Music has shaped our identity of ourselves but it acts as a tool. My research found that it was people who had already had established relationship with the participants were the ones who helped create this identity. About half of the participants either agreed to their influence of music taste were either from their peers or from parents. Several shared memories I found among group members was being first exposed to the Pop genre through their peers. Many of the participants admitted to being in a group social setting when they first heard one of their favorite artists. One participant, Lynne, shared where she was when she heard her favorite artist, “The sleepover was when I was introduced to the Spice Girls and I had a group of friends in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade who were obsessed. All Spice Girls all the time.”

These types of answers were typical for the women of my focus groups. What was most interesting was that the majority of my focus groups were women, and when I asked them to recall specific artists, they listened to, many of them picked from the boy band genre. This was something I had not taken into account when specifying my demographics for qualified participants. I noticed the males begin to struggle to find something to add to the discussion. Their memories ventured away from the Pop genre and more towards Rock and Punk. The males in the groups described themselves as being apart of a group or wave. One participant described himself as a punk/skater and listened to only what his friends did. Their memories had more labels, in regards to the way they acted or dressed. In one study, it was found that “Shared listening, exchanging (recorded) songs, and talking about music create a sense of belonging and

connect a person's sense of self to a larger community and generation," (Van Dijck, 2006). The males of my groups seemed to be more self-aware of this phenomenon.

In addition to parents and peers, the media was the driving force of music exposure to the world. "Friends and MTV. They would play videos and everyone would talk about it and you would wanna see what it was all about," said one participant. Once a particular other, whether it be peers or friends, bought into an artist or genre that became the starting point to the wave of a music movement.

One topic that came up in several conversations was a comparison with the 90s generation and the present generation. The participants found themselves defending their own generation while criticizing today's. Some made some very interesting points, one participant by the name of "It was like young people singing to young people in a really weird twist because now you have older people singing to younger generations. For us that's not how it was. Britney Spears was our age and we were singing to her." Many of the participants enjoyed listening to the music of their childhood because they felt like they connected to the artists themselves. Another participant made a similar comment, Betty "I feel like the issues they talked about in the songs then were not as vulgar as they are now. Like Nicki Minaj singing those things, they go to a whole another level of sex and stuff. That era had none of that. There were only hints, but straight saying it, no." It's interesting how this idea of self-image has changed just over two generations. Kids are listening to more mature music at a young age that more explicitly features sex and drugs.

It is clear that the main source of influence that many people have in regards to music choice and eventually leading into the shaping of identity is peers. Some mentioned that parents made them listen to "their" music but it didn't have as large of effect as friends and peers did.

Music for some was an outlet for free thought and expression, which lead to this idea of self-identity, being influenced by particular others.

Music clearly has been proven to act as a vehicle for memory retrieval. The overall consensus of types of memories remembered was happy ones. Many people could also associate certain people to certain songs. Peers and friends (particular others) were the driving force of many people's self-identity at that particular age. One participant described it the power of music best as, "It's funny how you can remember song lyrics from 10 years ago, but you can't remember someone's name from yesterday."

### **Future Research**

Some suggestions for further research would be to expand on a how gender plays a role in shaping identities and memories of music. I think it would be interesting to compare the differences in male and female memories. I would also look at asking the participants to retrieve memories from the ages between 13-15 years old. This is a self-identity transition period for many, so I wonder if the types of memories recalled would be associated with an emotion aside from solely happy ones.

I would also think it would be interesting to look specifically at the music videos of that era, boy bands/girl power era. I think the music video had a great impact on how kids of that era created a sense of identity. So instead of listening to various music clips, I suggest that researches analyze the music videos either through another focus group or through text analysis.

### **Conclusion**

Music clearly acts as a vehicle for memory retrieval. There has been prior research that determined the impact music has had on people, beyond just an agent for memory recall.

"Popular music was observed to be 'a blending of personal, social, and cultural significance,'"

(Allan, 2006). Allan also determined that in the advertising aspect of media, marketers can use music to their advantage by creating an ad with popular songs. This ultimately adds personal significance to the ad and successfully creates an effective marketing strategy. This is just one example of how music has become such a driving tool in many aspects of the media/marketing industry and personal lives. All of this ties back into this idea of emotions following the retrieval of memories.

Through my study of music and its effects on the memory and self, I found that the consensus of types of memories remembered were happy ones, this being my first theme I discovered. Many people could also associate certain people to certain songs. As defined earlier in the chapter, symbolic interactionism specifically deals with a “person’s self and socialization into a larger community,” (Griffin, 2009). My research directly targeted this idea of self and cohesiveness among a larger group. I found that music acted as symbol and participants began to engage in one another when music was incorporated into the discussion. Many of my participants associated certain people to things, in this case songs and lyrics. This is an example of *meaning* which is one of the three principles of symbolic interactionism.

The second theme that dealt with peers and friends (particular others) and found that they were the driving force of many people’s self-identity at that particular age. Though parents were also mentioned as a source of music, all participants agreed that it were peers that influenced their love for a certain artist or band. Many of the concluding interview questions confirmed that participants felt as though they had to like a certain band or imitate a certain person to feel accepted in the group. One participant explained it as such, “you had to choose, you either liked Backstreet Boys or \*NSYNC.” This confirms the idea of generalized other, another concept of

symbolic interactionism, which is the “mental picture a person has of his or her self-based on community expectations and responses,” (Griffin, 2009).

Both of my themes answered my two research questions, stated earlier. At least in a group setting, people only recalled happy memories, which were rather detailed. Music does serve as a viable tool for retrieving memories. To answer my second research question that specifically correlates to symbolic interactionism, people felt more comfortable in the group once they learned they were able to communicate through a shared symbol. In this case the symbol was music.

Overall, my research has determined that music carries with it much meaning behind it and because of that, it aids in recalling memories, and the shared sense of meaning behind music allows people to feel a part of a bigger community.

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## Appendix A

### Focus Group and Interview Schedule

#### *Introduction:*

I would like to take the time to welcome and thank you all for meeting with me today. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Michelle Moodhe. I am currently a senior at Longwood University. I've decided to conduct a study to discover if music acts a trigger for memories, specifically examining the types of memories that are being recalled.

I would like to take this time to let you know what we will be doing in today's focus group and what exactly is going to happen. This focus group will last up to 45 minutes. During the duration of this discussion we will be listening to various clips of songs chosen by you all in the group and I will be asking all of you, as a group, several questions. I will be recording the discussion to insure accuracy when uncovering the results of this study. I will begin recording after we introduce ourselves. If at any time during this discussion period you feel uncomfortable being recorded, please feel free to ask that the recorder be shut off during the duration of your response. At any point if you wish your comments not to be recorded please just let me know and I will turn off the recorder. We will all address each other with fake names to ensure complete privacy. Please know that myself and my advisor (Dr. Tracy) will be the only ones who have access to the device and recorded discussion. At the end of my research all the recorded discussions from the focus group will be permanently deleted, to secure that no one will have further access to the recordings. No "real" names will be used in this study neither in the discussion nor in the final thesis.

Most importantly, remember it is your choice to participate in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the discussion or do not wish to continue, you are free to withdraw at anytime. You will be asked questions of your past and childhood, if you are uncomfortable about discussing anything during the focus group, know that you are not required to talk about or answer anything that may make you uncomfortable. To ensure accuracy in this study, I may want to contact you at a later date to make sure I am describing the conversation correctly. You have the choice on whether or not you want to be contacted later. If for any reason, you do not understand a question I have asked, please feel free to let me know.

Prior to beginning, I would like to clarify what I mean by trigger. When I say the word "trigger" I simply mean "prompt" "activate" or "produce." For example: the smell of honey suckles triggers happy childhood memories of running around outside during the summer. In this case I consider music to be something that activates dormant memories. It is important that we all understand the synonyms of the word, just so that we are all on the same page.

Before we start let's all go around and introduce ourselves with a "fake" names you all have chosen. This will help me identify different voices on the recorded without giving away your real name. After we have completed this task, I will begin recording.

### *Interview Schedule*

**Exposure:**

1. What type of music did you listen to when you were in elementary school?
2. Can you recall specific artists/bands?
3. Who was your favorite?
4. How and when were you first exposed to this artist/band?
5. Was your music choice influenced by anyone? Peers? Family? Friends?

[I will then play various clips from the songs that each participant chose.]

**Recall:**

1. What is the first thing you thought of when you heard this song?
2. Were these happy memories? Sad? Depressing? Etc...
3. Do you associate certain people with this song/memory? If so, who?
4. Why did you pick this song?
5. As a kid did you listen to the song for the lyrics? Or were there other reasons you liked it?
6. How would you describe pop culture during this time?
7. What kind of clothes did you wear?
8. Did you try to imitate people (celebrities) you saw in the media?

**Effects:**

1. Do you listen to this type of music today, at your age now, ever? If so, then why?
2. Do you listen to it for nostalgic reasons?
3. Have you ever been in a position when you are with a group of people and one of these songs from your childhood comes on?
4. If so, what normally happens? How does everyone react?

**Meaning:**

1. After discussing various memories with each other, do you feel as though the atmosphere of the focus group has changed?
2. Does anyone feel more comfortable now than when they walked in?
3. Did you find yourself recalling any similar memories as anyone else in the group?
4. What part does music play in your life today?
- 5.

Thank you for participating in my study. The information I have gathered is both helpful and informative for my study. There have been many studies about music and memories but none have examined shared memories among a group of individuals. Thank you again, I hope this was a good experience for you. I also would appreciate it if you did not discuss this interview with any of your friends until after the final interviews have taken place



**Appendix B*****List of Songs Played***

Hanson Brothers- "Mmmmbop"

Aaron Carter- "I Want Candy"

\*NSYNC- "Bye, Bye, Bye"

Backstreet Boys- "I Want it That Way"

Backstreet Boys- "Tearin' up my Heart"

S Club 7- "Don't Stop Movin"

Britney Spears- "Lucky"

Britney Spears- "Oops I Did it Again"

MC Hammer: "Can't Touch This"

Blink 182- "All the Small Things"

Christina Aguilera- "Genie in a Bottle"