

**Business School “Vzmakh”**

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**Topic: How is the “everyday tragedy” reflected in the musical choice of teenagers?**

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## Table of contents

|                                                  |    |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table of contents .....                          | 2  |
| Introduction .....                               | 3  |
| Chapter I.....                                   | 4  |
| Tragedy as it is in Culture and Psychology ..... | 4  |
| 1.1 Tragedy in Culture.....                      | 4  |
| 1.2 Tragedy in Psychology .....                  | 5  |
| Chapter II.....                                  | 7  |
| Teenagers and Music .....                        | 7  |
| Chapter III.....                                 | 9  |
| Research findings .....                          | 9  |
| Conclusion.....                                  | 12 |
| References .....                                 | 13 |

## Introduction

My topic is “How is the “everyday tragedy” reflected in the musical choice of teenagers?” I have chosen this topic because it is up to date (for these days teenagers and their worries, tastes, traits have gone public because of the Internet) and has social significance for teenagers are many and they are actually our future, so knowing connection between their musical taste and their current mental state might help understand them and avoid some communication problems.

In my work I have studied the meaning of the tragedy itself, tragedy in different spheres; teenagers’ psychotypes and how their musical preferences are depend on teenagers’ psychotypes. My first objective was to prove that there is a reasonable relation. The second point was to understand whether or not a teenager’s personality (such traits as optimism and sociability) dictates musical preferences of this teenager. To do so, I used special psychological literature and opinions of psychologists, interview with the teenagers themselves and the analysis of acquired information.

The plan of my academic writing is the following:

In the first chapter I gave the definition of the tragedy and did a research on its presence and meaning in culture, psychology and everyday life.

In the second chapter I made assumptions that became my hypothesis. Then I accurately chose three musical genres which I used in the future enquiry. These are the following: Heavy Music (Rock/Metal), Rap, Electronic. I also described the most common clichés and stereotypes about representatives of these genres. Then I divided thirty people into three groups judging by their musical preferences and offered them a Leongard test of personality’s accentuation and some other tests.

In the third chapter I presented the results and analysis of this test and summed up my research.

## Chapter I

### Tragedy as it is in Culture and Psychology

#### 1.1 Tragedy in Culture

To study the role of the tragedy in lives of the teenagers we firstly need to define and describe tragedy in its different incarnations. So, what is tragedy? “Tragedy is a form of drama based on human suffering that invokes in its audience an accompanying catharsis or pleasure in the viewing” as the web encyclopedia puts it. Which brings us to the tragedy’s first incarnation – tragedy in Culture.

The origins of tragedy lie in Hellenistic culture. Athens and Attica had four annual celebrations in the name of Dionysus, the god of wine and festivity. On one of them a goat was sacrificed and after that a competition of theatrical performances took place. Back then theater existed only with chorus singing during the play, and that is how the word “tragedy” appeared (“*tragos*” – a goat, “*ode*” – a song).

The first poet performing during Dionysus’ festival was Thespis in 534 BC. This event became the moment of birth of the theatre because since then these plays became annual.

The Golden age of Athens’ dramatic arts happened because of three famous Athenians – Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

Aeschylus (born in 525 BC) wrote from 72 to 90 dramatic works, amidst them there are “Persians”, “Agamemnon”, “Prometheus Bound” and lots of others. He won those competitions thirteen times starting from 484 BC, but later met young Sophocles as a powerful opponent. In his tragedies Aeschylus reflected such topics as Redemption, Fate, and civic duty, which were the most important problems of that age. But the main idea of his works was faith in humanity, its power and dignity.

Sophocles (born in 496 BC) was very different from Aeschylus. For example, he was Fortune’s favorite one, good-looking, very gifted, wealthy, popular and respectable. In his works (“Oedipus the King”, “Antigone”, “Ajax”, “Electra”, “Oedipus at Colonus”, “Philoctetes”, “Women of Trachis”) he mostly emphasized people’s interactions with each other and the State unlike the Aeschylus who accented Supernatural powers standing atop people and deciding their Fate. Sophocles was more interested in moral dilemmas, (e.g. moral responsibilities) especially when a hero had some power over the others, just like the author himself. His greatness lies in depicting people as they should be rather than what they actually are.

Euripides (born in 480 BC) was the first to describe men’s vices and weaknesses, sufferings, misfortunes, which often lead to crime. Euripides was the predecessor of Shakespeare

and his psychological drama. To sum up, the Great Dramatists' main idea is the following: people suffer because it is inevitable. This idea could sound quite simple but it is a foundation of tragedy in Culture which later made a significant impact on perception of personality and everyday life.

So, these three fathers of ancient tragedy brought a lot of brilliant ideas to the genre, wrote a plenty of masterpieces and predetermined the structure and topics of the tragedy for many following centuries.

## 1.2 Tragedy in Psychology

Strictly speaking, there is no such term as “tragedy” in psychology, but it could be assumed that life of a usual teenager is a lot like a tragedy. Throughout their maturing teenagers face lots of unpleasant things, such as constant never-ending depressions, problems with peers and education, low self-esteem and so on.

To narrow down the list of studied problem I will only describe depression because of its destructiveness and prevalence.

So, the teenage depression (or the teenage crisis) is the longest of all crises, which marks the most important steps of forming of a child's personality. Two premises are defined: external and internal. They are represented in the following table (**Table 1**).

| Premises of the Teenage Crisis                  |                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| External                                        | Internal                                                             |                                                                                                                     |
|                                                 | Biological                                                           | Psychological                                                                                                       |
| 1. Change of educational character.             | 1. Physiological growth and biological ageing of an organism.        | 1. Changes in motivation-requirement sphere.                                                                        |
| 2. Lack of unified demands.                     |                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |
| 3. Establishment of social works in the school. | 2. Physiological changes in circulatory and musculoskeletal systems. | 2. Forming of an interest system: “egocentric dominant”, “distance dominant”, “force dominant”, “romantic dominant” |
| 4. Appearance of new demands in the family.     |                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |
| 5. Change of child's status in the family.      | 3. Hormonal reconstruction of an organism, puberty.                  |                                                                                                                     |
| 6. Extension of teenager's social connections.  |                                                                      |                                                                                                                     |

When all of this processes start, the negative phase of the Coming of Age begins. It is characterized by anxiety, physical and psychological disproportion, hostility, emotional

inconsistency, lowered efficiency, melancholy and etc. A prolonged and ignored depression may accidentally lead to a suicide.

As it can be seen from the table, the teenage crisis is characterized by a variety of symptoms and causes, from physical change to psychological development. This process can be described as complex and individual for every teenager. However, almost every teenager faces difficulties when coping with changes in personal and physical development.

What does it mean and why am I sure that teenager's life is a tragedy? The reason for that is that perception of this crisis is very personal and emotional. As a result, the behavior caused by these changes has a negative effect on the things that form an average teenager's life. Problems with studies, relationships, communication and self-esteem and the realization of these problems can cause a state of mind which fits the description of tragedy. This "everyday tragedy" has a lot in common with tragedy as it was described by ancient authors.

## Chapter II

### Teenagers and Music

Now that we know what tragedy is and we've seen one of the examples of an impact that problems have on a teenager's life making it a tragedy, we can finally state my point of view. I believe that all those different teenagers are united by one massively popular part of culture – music. Furthermore, I am certain that teenagers, being in a very special situation when they mature, when moral beliefs, confrontation with others and some other aspects of their life make them a perfect embodiment of classic tragedy hero models, choose (or are chosen by) a music genre according to their overall life situation, mood or so-called psychotype. I also think that music, at least the “Heavy” one (meaning Rock and Metal), often somehow intersects with the tragedy motives, using stories about unhappy love, betrayal, death, dissatisfaction and etc., and for that reason it is accepted better by teenagers who, as already mentioned, are often very much alike with tragedy heroes. To prove this, I executed a series of interviews.

In order to get a result I found a group of thirty people and divided them by their musical preferences (Heavy Music, Rap and Electronic). After that they were given Leongard's personality test to find out their personality accentuation, along with few other interviews. The aim of my research was to determine the connection and relations between respondents' personality accentuation, their evaluation of their life situation and overall mood and their musical preferences.

But first let's take a quick look at these three musical genres and their representatives beginning with Rock.

So, briefly, rock-music emerged in the middle 60s, the sound of rock is traditionally centered on the electric guitar. The music sounds hard, dynamic, but it actually can sound however the band wants because of extremely and overly wide variation of sub-genres (like rock-mainstream, art-rock and etc.). This is actually a reason why I'm not going to write a lot about Heavy Music. The text usually represents a plot or a story, mostly about suffering because of different reasons. Metal emerged from hard-rock, so it is very similar to Rock, but far more brutal – texts are often filled with description of ultra violence, praises to the Metal and hope for death. Often, but not always, so the main thing we need to remember about Heavy Music is that it's called “Heavy” for a reason.

Electro music's known trait is making compositions from unusual, synthetic, urban, technogenic or “space” sounds; minimum rhythmical constructions and almost complete lack of vocal.

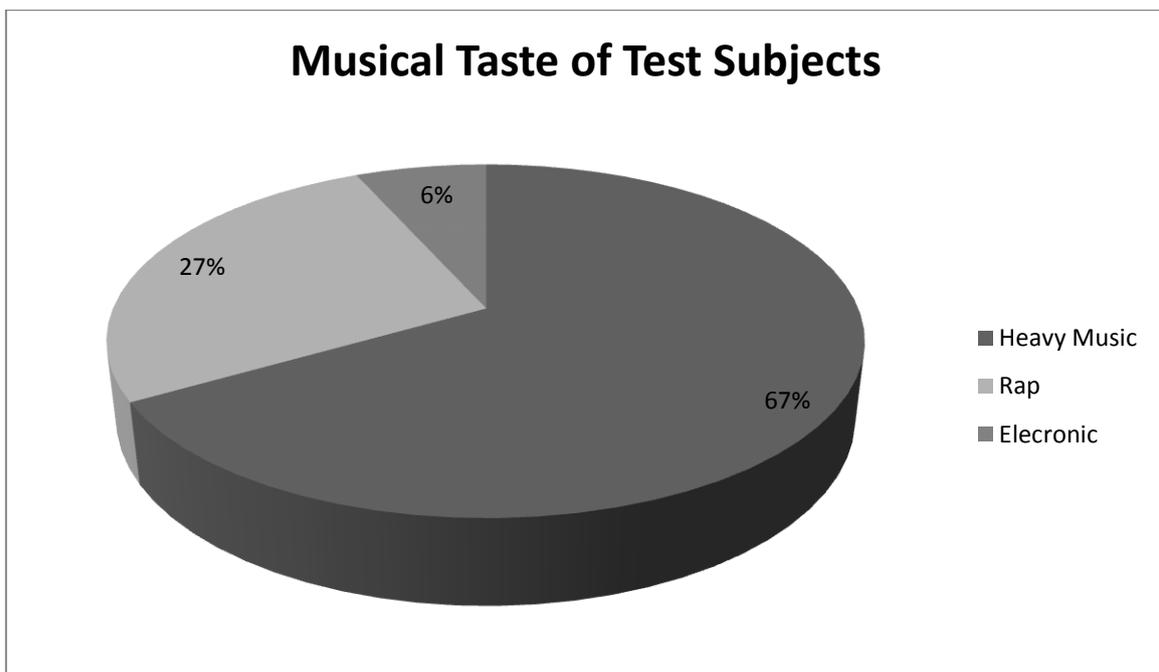
Rap - rhythmical recitative, usually performed with beat, performer is called rapper. Rap's lyrics are usually less dangerous and depressive, more self-assured and bold. Rappers can pretty much sing about anything but when I hear "rap" I usually picture golden chains and Afro-Americans singing about parties and "hot chicks".

To sum up, I suggest a hypothesis that a teenager's personality accentuation and overall self-perception are directly related to this teenager's musical taste. To make the research clearer, I concentrated on three music genres which are popular among teenagers and can be easily distinguished. To prove my hypothesis I conducted two surveys which covered a total of 40 people. My research findings are presented on the third chapter.

## Chapter III

### Research findings

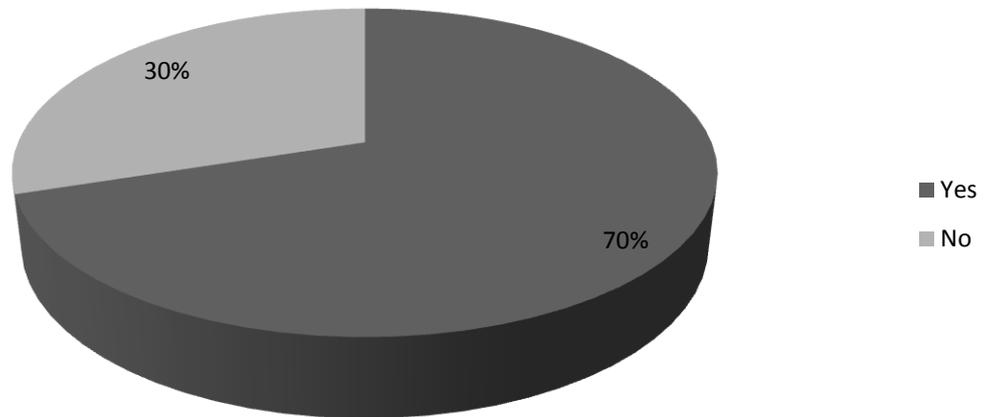
As I already mentioned, I offered 30 people a test in order to prove the connection between their psychotypes and their preferred music genre. The results weren't as encouraging as I hoped – Leongard's system was too complex to clearly determine the outcome of the research. It contained five psychotypes per person with distribution of points to each questioned basing on an answer. This system could be useful for self-exploring cause but it proved to be not too effective for our research. No significant similarities were found between respondents who enjoyed the same genre. So I made another interview that also included 30 test subjects who were different from each other, meaning differences in character, musical preferences, life values and beliefs. The Test subjects were teenagers from 14-16 years old, studying at school. The results are presented in Tables 2,3,4.



**Table 2.**

This was a much better result, just as I anticipated. But just to make sure I decided to prove the third part of my thesis – that preferred music matches the mood/current state of a person. And under “preferred music” I meant music, preferred at the moment when situation happened or mood was clearly expressed. The results are presented in Table 4.

### Is the Music that you listen to connected with your opinion about life, your principles?



**Table 3.**

So, what do these results mean? Firstly, I didn't succeed at finding any obvious relation between teenager's psychotypes and its favorite music genre. This is actually predictable – first of all, Socionics isn't a very respectable section of Psychology and sometimes considered pseudo-science. Secondly, Leongard's method of analysis includes several dimensions and it brings additional difficulties to the task of connecting these dimensions to an external concept.

Now let's analyze Table 3. The interview has proven that mostly there is a connection between person's opinion about life, his views, beliefs, principles. That brings us back to the second chapter – if a teenager's life has a lot in common with tragedy, he will probably choose "Heavy Music", where lyrics are mostly about pain, injustice of this world, conflicts and etc.

And lastly, Table 4. This interview proved that music often reflects person's current situation in life, problems, successes and fails, happiness and depression. So if a teenager's angry, dissatisfied, then he will probably listen to something matching his thoughts, something heavy, while when he's happy, he will listen to something cheerful.

**Is your mood or current situation in life reflected in the preferred music?**

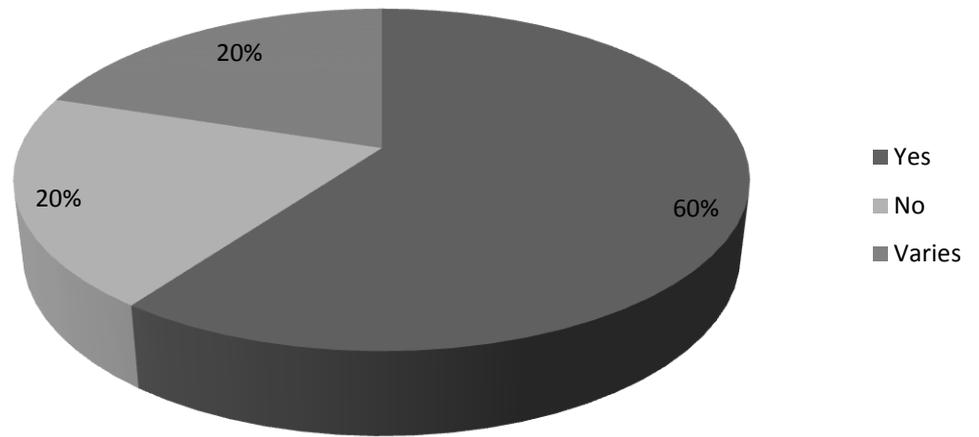


Table 4.

## Conclusion

So, my hypothesis was that teenagers prefer the music that better coincides with their often very hard and even tragic lives, their inner selves, beliefs, principles, views on life, psychotypes or current life situations. To prove this I made a solid research.

In the first chapter I studied the birth and Golden Age of tragedy as a theatrical genre; the etymology of this word and its definition. I also found out that three greatest Athenian dramaturgists – Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides – predecided topics and motives of tragedy for years to come and we use them even in our days, for example, in songs. Other than that, I gave several examples of difficulties that teenagers often face during Coming of Age and Teenage Crisis.

In the second chapter I stated my hypothesis and explained it; described how I proved my thesis and examined three genres of music that I chose for my first enquiry. I also learned that tragedy or some of its elements and motives are very often used in Rock and Metal, rarely in Rap.

In the third chapter I described the enquiries that I conducted, their results and analyzed them. It gave me all the necessary information to make a conclusion.

After all the investigation that was done I can finally say that I managed to prove my hypothesis: there is a connection between teenager's life, his "everyday tragedy" and a music he chooses to listen.

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