The goal of this study was to identify terms that people associate with pro- and anti-social rap.

Research suggests that individuals may identify themselves with and in the terms/concepts present in the music they listen to. For example, rap music is associated with identity formation, self-esteem, gender attitudes, and body image (Dixon, Zhang, & Conrad, 2009; Henry, West, & Jackson, 2010). We hypothesized that these self-conceptualizations might differ depending on the focus of the rap music listened to: pro-social or anti-social.

Using an online survey, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they associated a list of terms/concepts with both pro- and anti-social rap.

We identified terms that participants associate with one sub-genre significantly more than with the other sub-genre. For instance, calm and ethical were associated more with pro- social rap while hostile and dangerous were associated more with anti-social rap.

This research is important because listening to rap music has been shown to have a wide range of effects on its listeners, and it is hypothesized that associations learned through rap music may act as a pathway for these effects (Travis & Bowman, 2012). Violence, substance use, misogyny, self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and risky sexual behavior are just a few outcomes associated with rap music (e.g. Johnson and Baker, 2015; Travis and Bowman, 2012; Tropeano, 2006). While many of these effects are negative, it is possible that if one were to examine sub-genres of rap, the effects might be more varied. Listening to pro-social rap may lead individuals to identify with more positive concepts, thereby mitigating some of the previously demonstrated negative effects.

The genre-specific concepts identified in this pilot study will be used in a follow-up study to determine if an individual's self-concept matches the concepts present in the sub-genre of rap music most listened to.