

MONEY IN MUSIC: AN INNOVATIVE TEACHING APPROACH

Elizabeth Scannell, University of Vermont<sup>1</sup>

A seminar titled "Financial Security Starts Now" was designed for couples and individuals age 35 and older. The purpose was to introduce key concepts and practices of financial planning.

Lyrics from popular music were selected to reinforce three concepts: controlling spending, using credit, and making investments. These musical interludes were used to help the participants reflect on the financial values, attitudes, and behaviors popularized by these songs and music in general. Did they agree or disagree with the lyrics' message? Does music influence our financial behavior? If so, how?

The music was organized by concept. For example, for credit the song "Atlantic City" by Bruce Springsteen was taped with about five other songs on credit. These lyrics were played: "Well, I got a job and tried to put my money away but I got debts that no honest man can pay. So I drew what I had from the Central Trust and I bought us two tickets on that Coast City bus." The tape was played prior to disseminating information on credit. In a two hour seminar a total of seven minutes of music was played. Each musical interlude lasted just over two minutes.

Popular and country western music was chosen so that the seminar concepts might be reinforced when the participant heard one of the songs in a different setting. Participants evaluated the musical interludes as an interesting teaching approach. Some aged 60 or older could not relate to the popular music but did appreciate the country western songs and the concepts presented.

In addition to lyric phrases, the poster included a list of songs and composers by financial concept. Two sample cassette tapes and recorder were available. For a copy of the cassette, available for educational purposes only, send \$5.00 to Elizabeth Scannell, MCSD Department, 207 Terrill Hall, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0148.

---

<sup>1</sup> Extension Assistant Professor