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Ownership Behaviors in Children's Music Culture

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by

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Abstract

Adults may demonstrate cultural ownership of music in various ways, but children are limited in their artistic expression by the restrictions of youth, parental authority, and financial subordination. This project evaluates the ownership behaviors demonstrated by 60 third and fourth grade female students in Albany, NY. Considering self-reported behaviors and the completion of creative activities in the general music classroom, the study also examines a secondary question: is there a difference in the way children interact with music of their own choosing as compared to the music of a teacher's choosing? Results from this project indicate that students naturally respond to music within their cultural idiolect through creative movement, singing, and choice of listening material. In addition, empirical findings suggest that students are willing to demonstrate creative movement toward music of any genre, regardless of self-reported dislike. Children's engagement toward instrumental activities, and the results of these activities, were more creative when accompanying liked music than disliked music. However, more research is needed to clarify and justify any potential correlation.

Keywords: music, cultural ownership, movement, instruments

Acknowledgement

With great thanks to the body of teachers and researchers who have combined to forge the living organism of music education today, greater thanks to my own teachers and loved ones for their guidance and support, and greatest thanks to the children who tirelessly inform this process.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Adults may demonstrate cultural ownership of music in various ways. Purchasing music for streaming or download, attending concerts, following artists on social media, and wearing performers' merchandise are common behaviors throughout various music cultures. These practices allow adults to explore their own musical idiolects independently or socially, with some behaviors acting as visible badges of identity for others to observe. Many of these avenues are unavailable to children, especially in cases where the child's musical tastes fail to align with those of their guardians. Even the simplest ways of demonstrating musical choice, such as choosing the soundtrack for a car ride, are often accessible only to adults. How, then, do children claim ownership of material in their musical cultures? An increase in the availability of technology has allowed for greater freedom in selecting and listening to music, especially in homes where children possess their own Internet-equipped devices. However, listening independently at home relegates musical ownership to primarily individual pathways as children are typically only free to explore music on their own. Outward-facing behaviors which display musical culture (concert attendance, merchandise ownership, downloading music, etc.) typically rely on the financial powers of adults. The ownership behaviors listed above for adults provide a mixture of solitary actions (following artists on social media, purchasing music for download) and social demonstrations (attending concerts, displaying merchandise). Children are naturally musical and social beings; where, then, is the evidence of that intersection?

Significance of the Study

Historically, the preferences and opinions of young people have been subsumed into the culture of their associated adults, with comparatively little attention given to the self-owning cultures of children. Although children have long held legal rights, clearly posited by the League of Nations and reinforced now by the United Nations,[1] their stature as independent culture bearers is often overlooked. This lack of attention stems from natural barriers inherent in childhood, an ephemeral phase in development which is not formally analyzed by its own population. Childhood is unique among people groups in that academic studies by insider members are nonexistent, with the population relying on outside voices to perform this work. By the time one is in a position to evaluate the culture of childhood, one is no longer a child. It is important to recognize children as an independent group with their own motivations and actions, albeit limited in expression by barriers of age. Pediatric consultant Vic Larcher notes, "Children are not small adults who can be treated as though they were, and neither are they uniformly vulnerable beings who need protection; rather they are individuals in transition whose growth into adulthood should be supported, encouraged, and facilitated."[2] Therefore, this study does not stand in apology or protection for a defenseless group. Rather, it acts in the advocation of children's music culture, respecting young voices as the input of an intrinsically valued community without caveat or compunction.

This study seeks to reaffirm the value of children's music exploration, education, and exposure. In New York, where this research takes place, there is no state requirement for

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[1] Vic Larcher, "Children Are Not Small Adults: Significance of Biological and Cognitive Development in Medical Practice," in *Handbook of the Philosophy of Medicine*, ed. Thomas Schramme and Steven Edwards (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017), 14, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8706-2_16-1.

[2] Ibid., 2.

students of any age to receive music education in school. The twelve required "common school branches" in New York extend from math and reading to personal hygiene and state history, with music and arts standing as notable omissions. New York Senate Bill 285, which proposes the mandatory addition of music and arts education to public school curricula, has been circulating in various iterations through the state assembly since 2019 with no result.[3] Though formal music education is only one of many ways for children to speak, sing, and play music, its omission from state curricula reveals much about its perceived value for children. Often, when justifying music education, proponents cleave to arguments regarding the supposed "Mozart Effect"[4] or other cognitive benefits. What about encouraging music for the sake of music itself? Children deserve chances to act musically, to signal their identity through selection and creation, and to experience music education delivered by supportive adults. This author aims, in some small measure, to signify the value of these explorations as intrinsically worthwhile instead of as functions toward a higher academic or cognitive space. Children's cultural claims toward music, and their diverse interactions with self-selected repertoire, should act as a reminder of this.

Research Questions

This study examines the question: how do children demonstrate cultural ownership of music? Evaluating this necessitates a consideration of behavior patterns regarding music from varied sources, inspiring the secondary question: is there a difference in the way children interact with music of their own choosing as compared to music of a teacher's choosing? Though a

[3] New York State Senate, General Assembly, Education Committee, NYS Senate Bill 285, 2023-2024 Legislative Session, https://legislation.nysenate.gov/pdf/bills/2023/s285.

[4] J.S. Jenkins, "The Mozart Effect." Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine 94 no. 4 (2001): 170-172. https://doi.org/10.1177/014107680109400404.

fascinating arena for investigation, this study is not able to probe into auxiliary questions regarding differences in ownership behavior between self-selected and peer-selected music.

Summary

Young people advance their musical enculturation in three key areas: at play, at school, and at home. This study delves deeply into children's music culture to probe the ways in which children interact with their cultural property, identifying root musical behaviors that distinguish elements of one's own idiolect. Ownership in children's lives is an interesting concept as children have comparatively little property of their own and rarely any legal rights to their intellectual creations. How, then, can a child signify their ownership of various musical examples?

Young people are natural explorers who apply creativity widely in their lives. When children play with music, this manifests through parody and the creation of games to accompany known songs. Even in more formal, educational settings, students demonstrate their acceptance of new songs through the creation of novel lyrics or movements and the alteration of song structure. At home, where individualism is at its peak, children may signal their ownership of music simply by selecting it out of the seemingly infinite possibilities available online. This study aims to uncover the prevalence of these and other behaviors in children's claims of musical ownership, as well as to explore the differences in musical behaviors naturally exhibited toward adult-selected musical examples.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction: The Triviality Barrier

Historically, the music of children has received comparatively little attention in ethnography. This disparity clues the researcher into one critical issue when discussing childlore, a common reluctance known as the "triviality barrier."[5] Despite the rich history and widespread performance of children's songs during play, relatively few researchers concern themselves with childlore for its intrinsic value. Because of the overall belief in the shallowness or unimportance of music by children, many analysts occupy themselves primarily- or solely- by comparing childlore to the music of adults. Behind several analyses of musical childlore, the nagging question remains: "How do these infant responses lead to a more useful adult type of adaptation?"[6] This attitude is particularly unhealthy in light of the fact that children's songs are often so distinct as to seem stylistically "unrelated to adult music"[7] in their region. Without dedicated attention to child songs, unique styles are overlooked throughout the world.

This literature review aims to move beyond the triviality barrier to take a serious look at this seemingly non-serious enterprise. Children's music serves a variety of functions in children's culture, including interpersonal expression, development of problem-solving skills, and intrapersonal awareness through self-expression. As with any artistic discipline, context is essential to the underlying meaning of the exercise. This review seeks to survey children's musical culture in three of its main contexts: music in self-selected, social settings; music in

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[5] Brian Sutton-Smith, "Psychology of Childlore: The Triviality Barrier," *Western Folklore* 29 no. 1 (Jan. 1970): 8. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1498679#metadata_info_tab_contents

[6] Ibid., 3.

[7] John Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis* (United States of America: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 29.

formal, academic settings; and music at home, which is largely listening-centered, more passive, and digital in format.

Definition of Terms

Defining "a Child"

When discussing the exact definition of a child, it becomes readily apparent that in everyday application, "childhood" is a category less rigidly defined, and more intrinsically known. This "know-it-when-I-see-it" mentality has led to some fascinating definitions of childhood over the years. One of the most colorful and least prescriptive comes from Douglas Newton, who claims, "The world-wide fraternity of children is the greatest of savage tribes, and the only one which shows no sign of dying out."[8] In a more productive vein is Campbell's treatment of childhood as a continuum from "lap babies" and "knee children," to "yard children" and "school children."[9] While this helps to compartmentalize childhood into seemingly discrete stages, it also neglects adolescence altogether, rendering it less functional for ethnomusicological purposes. Perhaps the most widely accepted worldwide definition comes from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which labels its charge as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."[10] Despite the over-generalizations inherent in this categorization, for the purposes of this literature review, children will be defined as they are by the United Nations.

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[8] Quoted in Iona and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*. (United States of America: The New York Review of Books, 1959), 2.

[9] Patricia S. Campbell, "The Musical Cultures of Children," *Research Studies in Music Education* 11, no. 1 (Dec. 1998): 42-51, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X980110.

[10] UN General Assembly. Convention on the Rights of the Child. 20 November 1989, United Nations Treaty Series vol. 1577. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf.

Within this review, children's music will also be studied as a single category. When apparent, sub-categories will be noted by age group. This concurs with the general viewpoint often taken in ethnomusicological research of children. Campbell notes that, structurally, children's music is "strikingly similar throughout the world," claiming that "the child-song, with all of its cross-cultural similarities, shares similar features of melody, rhythm, form, and text topics that transcend culture."[11] Advances in technology further bridge the gap, allowing for the development of syncretic music idiolects even at an early age. Young observes, "Children in the so-called developing countries may have access to technologies and media items that enable them to have musical experiences that are globally similar, albeit locally articulated."[12]However, the generalization of children into a single category is not universally accepted. The music of children may be globally similar in some respects, but it is certainly not homogeneous. As Howard states, "It would be inaccurate to state that all musical characteristics of children's musical culture are identical. There are cases of culturally specific preferences and musical attributes that can be diametrically opposite."[13] Campbell, despite her belief quoted above in the striking global similarity of child song, considers child song genres "unique and not easily homogenized into a single identity."[14] Emberly likewise defines children's music culture as

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[11] Patricia S. Campbell, "The Childsong Genre: A Comparison of Songs By and For Children," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 7 no. 2 (1989): 15, https://doi.org/10.1177/875512338900700207

[12] Susan Young, "Toward Constructions of Musical Childhoods: Diversity and Digital Technologies," *Early Child Development and Care* 179 no. 6 (2009): 696, https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430902944908.

[13] Katherine Howard, "Music and Textual Content in Children's Vocalizations," *The Phenomenon of Singing* 9 (2013): 134, https://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/singing/article/view/1027/881.

[14] Patricia S. Campbell, "The Musical Cultures of Children," *Research Studies in Music Education* 11, no. 1 (Dec. 1998): 43, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X980110.

"diverse, and often rapidly shifting."[15] The implication that children's musical idioms are globally uniform can be misleading, even seen as unethical by some researchers. James argues that such a mindset "risks glossing over the diversity of children's own lives and experiences," instead baselessly assuming that children represent "one undifferentiated voice."[16] As with any group marked for study, it is important to remember that no population exists without variety; no one member can present a panoramic view of a culture, and a large sample size is always required for accurate data. This study attempts an ethnography of a specific geographic population, requiring a great deal of further study to achieve validity for the global culture of children. Luckily, with over a quarter of the world's population under the age of 18,[17] there are plenty of research subjects available.

Defining "Musical Idiolect"

Comprehension of musical idiolect requires a temporal view, as a person's tastes and selections will inevitably vary through time with life experience and exposure. Merriam-Webster incorporates this value into their definition of idiolect as "the language or speech pattern of one individual at a particular period of life."[18] Herein, the term "musical idiolect" is used to encapsulate the total sum of musical expressions provided by an individual's performances,

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[15] Andrea Emberly, "Ethnomusicology Scholarship and Teaching-Ethnomusicology and Childhood: Studying Children's Music in the Field," *College Music Symposium* 54 (2014): 2, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26574374.

[16] Allison James, "Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials," *American Anthropologist* 109 no. 2 (Jun., 2007): 262, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4496640.

[17] "World Population Dashboard," United Nations Population Fund, last modified 2022, https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard.

[18] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "idiolect," accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/idiolect.

selections, and preferences. Nettl proposes the model of musical identity as a series of concentric circles, spanning outward from the center of most highly meaningful musical experiences to the outermost, more superficial shell.[19] In this research, "inner shell" musical experiences are most useful in self-selection and most likely to be identified by children, but all experiences listed by the participants will be considered part of her own idiolect.

Idiolect is clearly distinguished from a music culture by its singularity; whereas children as a group may share elements of music culture, musical idiolect describes only the behaviors of the individual. To borrow a description from *My Music: Explorations of Music in Daily Life*, "Each person is unique. Like your fingerprints, your signature, and your voice, your choices of music and all the ways you relate to music are plural and interconnected in a pattern that is all yours, an 'idioculture' or idiosyncratic culture in sound."[20]

Defining "Cultural Ownership"

Admittedly, cultural ownership is a challenging concept to pinpoint. Physical altercations regarding cultural property are recorded as early as the sixth century AD,[21] and the spirit of these conflicts (though hopefully not their violence) is continued in the courtroom today. Despite the intricate politics of cultural artifacts, freedom of information is a modern priority as we strive for greater global understanding. Dr. Owen Gallagher, a professor of visual culture, argues for

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[19] Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 66.

[20] Susan D. Crafts, Daniel Cavicchi, and Charles Keil, *My Music: Explorations of Music in Daily Life* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 2.

[21] Owen Gallagher, "The Assault on Creative Culture: Politics of Cultural Ownership," in *The Participatory Cultures Handbook,* ed. Aaron A. Delwiche and Jennifer J. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 86.

greater transparency of privileged cultural information as he explains, “Cultural works or expressions are different from other types of possessions in that they exist primarily to communicate knowledge and ideas in one form or another, which is of benefit to society at large.”[22] In light of philosophical disagreements between monetary rights and freedom of information, one must acknowledge the limitations of a model of cultural ownership. The Interdisciplinary Seminar in the Humanities and Fine Arts at the University of Massachusetts wonders, “Is ownership an adequate model when it comes to matters of culture? ...what kinds of interests may make a legitimate claim, and how is their legitimacy determined?”[23] These are considerations that deserve careful consideration for legal purposes, but typically will not apply to cultural ownership by children. Ownership, to modern adults, is largely synonymous with monetary claims. While children may technically register their creations for copyright, they are highly unlikely to do so and are legally unable to enforce copyright on their own materials without adult support.

In addition, issues of appropriation arise often when adopting the cultural expressions of another group. Merriam-Webster defines the act of “appropriating” as “to take or make use of without authority or right.”[24] Taken literally, this definition poises children as the ultimate appropriators, as there are few published materials specifically featuring children’s creations and performances. Allowance must obviously be made for children to adopt and fairly use the cultural expressions of their associated adults. It has been remarked for some creative disciplines,

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Interdisciplinary Studies Institute, “Cultural Ownership,” University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2006-2007, https://www.umass.edu/isi/seminars-cultural-ownership.

[24] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “idiolect,” accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/idiolect.

such as folk storytelling, that ownership is "in the eye of the beholder."[25] Considering this philosophy and the legal conundrum introduced earlier, "cultural ownership" of music in this study should be interpreted to designate the child's self-selection and preference for a given music. While this may not qualify ownership for legal purposes and will not satisfy the court, it establishes the value of owned materials as pieces of the child's identity. Essentially, the materials culturally owned are those which the child will acknowledge as part of their musical idiolect and will describe as preferred above other music types.

Music at Play: Children's Music as a Social Exercise

Music is a social enterprise. It is difficult to argue with that, at its heart, music performance and study are intrinsically linked to group bonding and identity. Hargreaves and North posit that "Music has many different functions in human life, nearly all of which are essentially social."[26] Children are no exception to this social tendency, with an extensive portion of their musical culture predicated on play. Through double-dutch rhymes, hand clapping games, and circle dances, children are experts in accumulating musical knowledge informally, within the context of group performance, and while dedicated to the ultimate goal of having fun. Students use collaborative learning, performance, and composition of material through playing to reinforce social bonds, broadcast group identity to outside forces, and express their knowledge of the taboo in a safe space.

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[25] Wendy Welch, "Who Owns the Story?," *Storytelling, Self, Society* 5, no. 1 (Jan.-Apr. 2009): 18, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41943296.

[26] David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, eds, *The Social Psychology of Music.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.

Children's typical music learning on the playground is interpersonal and collaborative, with most groups consisting of mixed-age and mixed-ability members. Participants stand in close proximity to one another, often touching, and rely on the involvement of the group for success. Learning occurs through full immersion in the play experience, rather than phrase by phrase, as it does in the classroom.[27] In this way, there is a "blurred line between the roles of performer, listener and critic,"[28] increasing the children's sense of agency in the material. As the teachers and the learners, these participants "own" their musical culture, evidenced by their enthusiastic involvement in play as well as their reluctance to reveal their songs to "outsider" adults.[29] As Blacking affirmed in his seminal research with the Venda children, ownership of one's own music culture defines the paradigm of performance for children and adults. As he observed, "There is no doubt that many Venda children could perform adult music, but they do not do so because each social group has its associated style of music, its audible badge of identity, and it never seems to occur to people that music can be appreciated as sound divorced from a social context."[30]

Beyond the social framework of music enculturation, children also play within the syntax of known musical literature. Composition on the playground is perhaps the truest mark of musical ownership, as children explore and play within the parameters of their known literature to create variations. This also is a collaborative process: for example, one child introduces a

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[27] McPherson, Gary E., and Graham F. Welch, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education: Volume I*. (United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2012), 326-328.

[28] Eve Harwood, "Music Learning in Context: A Playground Tale," *Research Studies in Music Education* 11 no. 1 (1998): 56, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X9801100106.

[29] Marsh, Kathryn. *The Musical Playground: Global Tradition and Change in Children's Songs and Games.* (United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48-49.

[30] Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs,* 29.

variation, after which the group listens and ratifies it, having the child who introduced the alteration take charge of teaching it to the group.[31] This type of cooperative composition, ubiquitous on the playground, absorbs myriad skill levels to elicit participation from the most to the least musically-minded of a given social group.[32] Marsh notes that, in order to transform their music in this manner, children must be familiar with the "vernacular" of their genre to make appropriate changes in music, movement, and text. Despite the fact that the motivations behind such frequent variations are unknown, the process of introducing and transmitting song changes offers an important look into the interdependent compositional framework and social function of child song. Collaborative composition requires that leadership be continually transferred throughout the process, increasing the acceptance of all performers as owners of the material and accepted members of the group.

Ubiquitous in childlore are parody songs that attach new lyrics to a known standard tune; Peter and Iona Opie explore how these pieces allow the young composers to "challenge, undermine, and disarm adult power, to explore taboo topics as various as sex and toilets,"[33] as well as to "[show] independence without having to rebel."[34] Children spend the vast majority of their time policed by adults, both at school and at home. Topics that are socially restricted in adult conversation, such as the aforementioned "sex and toilets," are also those that children are curious about and interested in discussing. Incorporating these subjects into their unstructured

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[31] Kathryn Marsh, "Children's Singing Games: Composition in the Playground?," *Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research* 4 no. 1 (June 1995): 7-8, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X9500400102.

[32] Ibid., 9.

[33] Opie and Opie, *The Singing Game,* 391.

[34] Iona and Peter Opie, *The Singing Game.* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1985), 87.

play time through song lyrics and parody can provide an outlet for these socially prohibited behaviors while outside of the adult gaze. This can serve to reinforce children's shared culture by celebrating material that is banned by adults, serving as a badge of identity separating them from those in positions of power or authority. In addition to affirming the stance of children as vocally (but not militantly) anti-adult, teasing rhymes can also focus on other children. Derisive rhymes use mocking language to highlight perceived faults in the values of the song subject, reinforcing social norms like camaraderie, conformity, cooperation, and cleanliness.[35] Interestingly, these parody songs can often advance song preservation; Peter and Iona Opie noted in 1959 the propensity of schoolchildren to unknowingly repeat parody lyrics from as early as 1886. As the researchers shrewdly observed, the musicians were "trying to escape from one tradition [and] plunging headlong into another"[36] as they eluded the adults of the present to imitate the children of the past.

Parody songs can also be used to display one's life experiences, express worries, and help the creator to adjust to new situations. In the case study of Chelsea, a 12-year-old undergoing treatment for lymphoma, composing a parody of Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" constitutes part of her music therapy. This creation still carries the social meaning of a typical parody song although it was composed by one child and her adult therapist. Its creation and performance fulfill one of Chelsea's main goals set by her therapist to "verbalize feelings about her illness, treatment and hospitalization,"[37] allowing her to express herself to her therapist, her nurse, and

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[35] Simon J. Bronner, *American Children's Folklore*. (Little Rock: August House, 1988), 74.

[36] Opie and Opie, *The Language and Lore of Schoolchildren,* 90.

[37] Allison Ledger, "Song Parody for Adolescents with Cancer," *The Australian Journal of Music Therapy* 12 (2001): 25, https://muhc.ca/sites/default/files/MusicTherapy/Ledger%20-%20Song%20parody%20for%20adolescents%20with%20cancer.pdf.

her mother. Much like the defiance against authority in a typical parody song, Chelsea's parody seeks to establish her "mastery and control"[38] in her fight with cancer, even in some small measure.

Music at play is a powerful force for unifying social groups in children, and as seen in the performance of song parodies, can help to bolster social norms valued in their culture. In addition, parody songs may help to establish one's identity through comparison against a labeled outside force, be it a teacher, a non-conforming child, or lymphoma. Noting this power of musical play, da Silva details her experience in constructing safe artistic spaces for children in Brazilian *favelas.* Giving children a dedicated place to play and express themselves through music, she claims, allows the child to "separate himself/herself from previous identities"[39] and escape from the street violence common to their neighborhoods. As she continues, music "can criticize state and social indifference to the plight of marginalized communities. Music and dance become the principal 'weapons' in a struggle to transform society… through the bodies of children and adolescents. At the same time that they 'raise the consciousness' of society, these children also display and test their creativity with novel musical genres."[40] The power of music to reinforce social bonds, encourage self-expression, and transform identity is central to the experience of being a child, especially when combined with their natural inclination toward play. It is interesting to contrast this collaborative learning style with the framework of a typical music class, whose more rigid structure defines an entirely different set of underlying functions.

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Rita da Silva, "Reversing the Rite: Music, Dance, and Rites of Passage among Street Children and Youth in Recife, Brazil," *The World of Music* 48 no. 1 (2006): 83-97, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41699680.

[40] Da Silva, "Reversing the Rite," 83.

Music at School: Formal Music Classes and Children's Development

Music in the formal music classroom is often billed as the antithesis of children's natural learning through play. In comparing the two settings, Riddell laments, "music educators have exercised so little care in examining the music which is being played in their own neighbourhoods. An assumption that children merely reflect the adult world has led to a rather myopic vision of children's music."[41] The format of a typical classroom naturally sees a reduction in student choice. In a graded setting, participation is no longer optional, but compulsory. Anybody who has worked with young people can spot the inherent danger of requiring mandatory music-making in children. Immediately, it becomes apparent that a significant portion of the energy and creativity applied to singing games is excised when play becomes a requisite. Harwood observes the ability of children to use concepts learned in music on the playground, but also realizes that such skill transfer is one-sided; as she relates, children on the playground showcase "abilities cultivated in the general music class, but inside our schoolrooms those same children can seem devoid of energy or imagination, lacking rhythmic sense, and unable to sing or move with confidence."[42] Why is this so?

The issue of ownership of material in the classroom constitutes a glaring hurdle in the way of children's free expression. Whereas children have exclusive ownership over play songs, with adults largely barred from participation, ownership of classroom literature seems to reside

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[41] Cecilia Riddell, "Traditional Singing Games of Elementary School Children in Los Angeles," Order No. 9023293, (University of California, Los Angeles, 1990), 376. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/traditional-singing-games-elementary-school/docview/303827713/se-2?accountid=12085.

[42] Eve Harwood, "Content and Context in Children's Playground Songs," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 12 no. 1, (1993): 4, https://doi.org/10.1177/875512339301200101.

mainly with the teacher. Although schools tend to be more diverse than home environments,[43] the music selected for use in schools often shows a distinct lack of diversity. In Canadian music education, Hess identifies the curriculum as a colonizer, focusing extensively on Western art music, Western metrical and melodic norms, and Western standard notation.[44] In addition, teacher education enforces this ethnocentric curriculum by underrepresenting world music in college coursework; in a 2019 survey, most music education students felt they were only qualified to "briefly discuss" world music in their classrooms, and none indicated that they were confident in teaching it.[45] Placing such emphasis on Western art music ostracizes the vast majority of school-aged children who do not interact with this style at home or at play, reducing their sense of belonging in the curriculum and agency in the classroom. In a cross-cultural study by Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves, Portuguese children were shown to like music classes more than British children because the Portuguese classroom allowed students to bring in music to share with the class.[46] In the formal music class, students often believe that school music learning is false and alienates them from offering their opinions; this "top-down" approach, wherein the musical choices and agency are felt primarily (or exclusively) by adults, further

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[43] Amanda Minks, "Growing and Grooving to a Steady Beat: Pop Music in Fifth-Graders' Social Lives," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 31 (1999): 78, http://www.jstor.org/stable/767975.

[44] Juliet Hess, "Decolonizing Music Education: Moving Beyond Tokenism," *International Journal of Music Education* 33 no. 3 (2015): 336 –337, https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761415581283.

[45] Elizabeth R. Recob, "Ethnomusicology in the Classroom: A Study of the Music Education Curriculum and Its Inclusion of World Music" (Masters Thesis, Kent State University, 2019), 69. ProQuest (27805265). https://www.proquest.com/docview/2370484285?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=rue.

[46] Graça Boal-Palheiros and David J. Hargreaves, "Listening to Music at Home and at School," *British Journal of Music Education* 18 no. 2 (2001): 112, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051701000213.

estranges scholars from making meaningful choices and offering their opinions in the classroom.[47]

Of course, the disconnect between Western art music and popular styles occurs both directions, with students also enabling a sense of "content intolerance"[48] when confronted with disliked music in the classroom. Regarding this dissension in his own students, Senyshyn somewhat contrarily found himself both "astounded by the wide array of their musical taste and their boundless prejudice."[49] How can students be so intolerant of Western art music when their own tastes have such admittedly broad scope? Perhaps it returns to the concept of music ownership; surrounding students with their teachers' musical choices and rendering them unable to offer their preferences only contributes to children's existing fear that "music in school is not for or about them."[50]

Emphasis on innate ability level comprises another ostracizing force in the music classroom. The end goal of most traditional music classrooms, according to one teacher, is "perfection in performance."[51] This can be disheartening to a child who feels that they are not talented in music, especially when coupled with the fact that children's *perceptions* of their own

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[47]Zenker, Renate. "Music as a Lifelong Pursuit: Educating for a Musical Life," in *Questioning the Music Education Paradigm,* ed. L. R. Bartel (Canada: Britannia Printers, 2004), 132.

[48] Yaroslav Senyshyn, "Popular Music and the Intolerant Classroom," in *Questioning the Music Education Paradigm,* edited by L. R. Bartel (Canada: Britannia Printers, 2004), 112.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Jennifer B. Peters, "They Are Not a Blank Score." In *Questioning the Music Education Paradigm,* edited by L. R. Bartel (Canada: Britannia Printers, 2004), 11.

[51] Zenker, "Music as a Lifelong Pursuit," 121.

performance ability directly influence their *actual* performance ability.[52] As Gammon notices, "For pupils who do not have specialist support through private or school instrumental lessons, music is perceived to be a less available subject, a subject in which they are less likely to do well."[53] Contrast this to the social learning of the playground, wherein "Children's varying levels of understanding or skill may be accommodated and extended by [the] process of musical joint construction."[54]

Further entrenched in this direction is the perception of music education as a vehicle toward greater academic or cognitive gains, often referred to as "The Mozart Effect." Several studies have sought to debunk or affirm this effect as it pertains to spatial-temporal reasoning, but any evidence toward either conclusion is limited. In 2001, Jenkins stated that any benefits seen in testing after listening to Mozart sonatas were likely due to heightened brain stimulation, or "enjoyment arousal," because the listeners enjoyed the music; the effect was hypothesized to disappear in the absence of appreciation.[55] However, with longer input, limited benefits were apparent. In the same study, spatial-temporal reasoning was briefly heightened in three and four-year-olds following six months of piano lessons.[56] Črnčec also uncovers some possibility of skill

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[52] Susan O'Neill, "The Self-Identity of Young Musicians," in *Musical Identities*, edited by Raymond A.R. MacDonald, David J. Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell (Oxford University Press, 2002), 81, https://www.academia.edu/562310/The_self_identity_of_young_musicians#:~:text=%C%A0ONeill_2002_%2D_Identity.pdf.

[53] Gammon, Vic. "What Is Wrong with School Music? – a Response to Malcolm Ross," *British Journal of Music Education* 13, no. 2 (1996): 105, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051700003089.

[54] Marsh, "Children's Singing Games," 9.

[55] J. S. Jenkins, "The Mozart Effect," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 94 no. 4 (2001): 170, https://doi.org/10.1177/014107680109400404.

[56] Rausher et. al, "Music Training Causes Long-Term Enhancement…," *Neurological Research* 19 no. 1 (Feb., 1997): 5. https://doi.org/10.1080/01616412.1997.11740765.

transfer from music learning to other activities in a limited scope, saying, "Learning that occurs during music instruction, therefore, may transfer to other tasks. For example, learning to read musical notation and understand spatial relations on the keyboard requires visuo-spatial skills. Practising these abilities may lead to improved visuo-spatial abilities in other contexts, such as paper folding and cutting tasks."[57] This appears to offer promise for The Mozart Effect, indicating that gains in musical learning may spur academic growth as well. However, the observable extent of this phenomenon is so limited that the author simply concedes, "music instruction confers consistent benefits for spatiotemporal reasoning skills; however, improvements in associated academic domains, such as arithmetic, have not been reliably shown."[58]

The understanding that children would be best served in a redesigned curriculum that honors their natural methods of music learning becomes more apparent as research explores these areas. The importance of play as part of the educational framework has long been known by adherents of Orff Schulwerk, a pedagogy centered on play that considers itself "a model for optimal learning in the 21st-century classroom."[59] As Campbell likewise asserts, "The ways in which children use and value music should serve as the foundation for the instructional plans that we design and deliver to them."[60] Students' enhanced feelings of "competence, autonomy, and

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[57] Rudi Črnčec, Sarah J. Wilson, and Margot Prior, "The Cognitive and Academic Benefits of Music to Children: Facts and fiction," *Educational Psychology* 26 no. 4 (2006): 585, https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410500342542.

[58] Ibid., 579.

[59] "What Is Orff Schulwerk?," American Orff-Schulwerk Association, last modified 2022, https://aosa.org/about/what-is-orff-schulwerk/.

[60] Patricia S. Campbell, "What Music Really Means to Children," *Music Educators Journal* 86 no. 5 (2000): 36, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3399634.

relatedness"[61] in the play-centered classroom, as well as greater confidence in learning and composing new music, show the importance of using these informal strategies.[62] Griffin reminds future researchers that this is an area which merits further study, saying:

> Assumptions cannot exclusively be grounded in the conceptualization that research about children's music-making ought to take place solely within the school context. Additional research is required to better enlighten the profession about children's passions, hopes, dreams, and fears related to their music experiences, within both formal and informal contexts. Research in music education must also continue to welcome and embrace areas outside the classroom, where children's music making and experiences of music are often embodied.[63]

Following Griffin's directive, it behooves the music teacher to adopt an open view of children's music outside the classroom. To seize the pre-existing musical knowledge and repertoires of one's scholars fosters a greater sense of student agency and efficacy in the music room, and classroom motivation is never higher than when the students feel their voices are heard.

Music at Home: Children's Musical Enculturation and Development of Self

The primary venues for children's musical exploration are changing. Whereas the primary setting for children's musical interaction was once the schoolyard or classroom, it is now evident that another arena has begun to emerge as the central hub of children's musical enculturation: the household. In addition to actively initiating musical experiences through

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[61] Christopher J. Roberts, "Self-Determination Theory and Children's Singing Games In and Out of the Classroom: A Literature Review," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 36 no. 3 (2017): 12, https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123317741488.

[62] Lucy Green, "The Music Curriculum as Lived Experience: Children's 'Natural' Music-Learning Processes," *Music Educators Journal* 91 no. 4 (March, 2005): 31, https://doi.org/10.2307/3400155.31.

[63] Shelley M. Griffin, "Inquiring Into Children's Music Experiences: Groundings in Literature," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 28 no. 2 (2010): 47, https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123310361764.

creation or performance, children now absorb much of their music passively as part of multimedia. McCarthy notes the importance of digital music spaces as part of children's cultural interaction with music, attempting to study not only isolated performances led by children, but also the "ongoing soundtrack in children's everyday lives."[64] On average, adolescents listen to music for up to three hours daily and accumulate more than 10,000 hours of active music listening throughout adolescence.[65]

Music in the home serves different functions than music learned formally, or music explored in self-selected social groups. Rather than building sets of musical skills, this home-based navigation of music emphasizes enculturation over education as children explore aspects of their own identities with greater agency. It is widely believed that children's motivation to participate in music begins at home, largely because of its strategic position at the center of children's lives. Griffin posits that "children become socially enculturated into music depending on the sociocultural influences of family, peers, and neighbors,"[66] indicating that much of children's musical identity begins in the home. Adolescence in particular is also a time of shifting from family values to peer values, and adolescents' experiments with music may reflect this. Recognizing the importance of music in intrapersonal growth, Campbell hypothesizes, "Music may be an element that supports the transformation from child to adult. Music was also found to provide adolescents with a medium through which to construct, negotiate, and modify

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[64] M. McCarthy, "Researching Children's Musical Culture: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *Music Education Research* 12 no. 1 (2010): 7, https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800903569245.

[65] Dave Miranda, "The Role of Music in Adolescent Development: Much More than the Same Old Song," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 18 no. 1 (2013): 10, https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2011.650182.

[66] Griffin, "Inquiring into Children's Music Experiences," 44.

aspects of their personal and group identities, offering them a range of strategies for knowing themselves."[67]

Although it seems solitary and carries intrapersonal benefits, listening to music at home carries many traits of other social behaviors. Music listening can help the young to establish their membership in a given group, develop bonds with other listeners, and express one's own identity through ownership and choice. One study based in the UK identified two main reasons for adolescents' music listening: to satisfy their emotional needs and to "project an 'image' to the outside world."[68] Regarding the latter goal, North and Hargreaves note that music forms a "badge of identity"[69] which can signal deeper truths about the listener's identity. The researchers further observe that "A statement of musical preference is interpreted by adolescents as implying a range of other characteristics and values."[70] This can be seen in the existence of "guilty pleasure" listening; Minks found in 1999 that, although some boys did clandestinely enjoy the music of the Spice Girls, they would admit this only privately to the researcher, and would not defend the group in front of peers.[71] The boys' refusal to admit their enjoyment of the Spice Girls shows the importance of musical preference in identity signaling. Even the private listening of adolescents ties directly into the need for acceptance by their social groups. As Minks muses,

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[67] Patricia S. Campbell, Claire Connell, and Amy Beagle, "Adolescents' Expressed Meanings of Music in and out of School," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 55 no. 3 (Autumn, 2007): 221, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4543122.

[68] Adrian C. North, David J. Hargreaves, and Susan A. O'Neill, "The Importance of Music to Adolescents." *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 70 (2000): 255, https://doi.org/10.1348/000709900158083.

[69] Adrian C. North and David J. Hargreaves, "Music and Adolescent Identity," *Music Education Research* 1 no. 1 (1999): 75, https://doi.org/10.1080/1461380990010107.

[70] Ibid., 90.

[71] Minks, "Growing and Grooving to a Steady Beat," 88-89.

"Whether or not the fifth-graders I knew listened to popular music with friends… I think their pop music consumption represented a peer-oriented activity, even when pursued privately behind a closed bedroom door."[72] It is possible that children select music in the hopes of aligning themselves with a demographic of pre-existing listeners as well, using musical preference to affirm their own identity. North and Hargreaves found some evidence to support this type of "self-to-prototype matching"[73] in adolescent fans of chart pop music but were unable to replicate the findings in adolescent fans of rap. Anecdotally, instances of supposed self-to-prototype matching are easy to recollect. In a study of media production by refugee and migrant children, rap music was often selected for use by migrant boys who sought to emulate the dominant male persona seen in rap videos.[74]

As seen above, children have their musical idiolects, but they often are reluctant to express varied interests because of the desire for conformity. Children and adolescents naturally want to feel included in social groups; this manifests in their listening habits as they strive to "seem unique and independent in their musical tastes without seeming *strange,* maintaining a sense of social belonging in an image-oriented, purportedly individualistic society.*"*[75] Students may feel social boundaries drawn by others at play and at school, as other children influence social groups on the playground and the curriculum displays bias in the classroom. However, listening at home offers a place for children and adolescents to explore music freely without

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[72] Ibid., 82.

[73] North and Hargreaves, "Music and Adolescent Identity," 87.

[74] Sonja de Leeuw and Ingegerd Rydin, "Migrant Children's Digital Stories: Identity Formation and Self-Representation through Media Production," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10 no. 4 (2007): 457, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407081948.

[75] Minks, "Growing and Grooving to a Steady Beat," 87.

adhering to the wishes or structures of others. Therefore, in a sense, this is the site of the greatest musical integrity for children as they may navigate the world of music without fear of judgment or repercussion. Self-selected listening at home may also uniquely show children's intentions as they begin to show alignment with certain aspects of adult culture. Christenson and DeBenedittis explain, "When they listen to radio or other sources of pop music, children are essentially 'eavesdropping,' listening in on a culture to which they may desperately aspire (especially as they near adolescence) but which is not yet theirs."[76]

As children learn to select and share their listening preferences with family and friends, they begin to build musical agency and emotional engagement with music as part of their social identity.[77] The informal learning children use at home lends itself primarily to social-emotional purposes, contradicting the academic aims of school music classes.[78] Listening to music promotes character-building and resilience in teenagers, especially when self-selected. The discourse of challenging themes such as sexuality, independence, and identity directly correlates to the challenges and emotional intensity of adolescence. As Laiho advocates, "The importance of music as a device for promoting adolescent health in everyday life should not be underestimated."[79] Music provides an outlet for children to experience their emotions in a safe context, helping to build coping skills while supporting mental health.

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[76] Peter G. Christenson and Peter DeBenedittis, "'Eavesdropping' on the FM Band: Children's Use of Radio," *Journal of Communication* 36 no. 2, (June 1986): 29, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1986.tb01421.x.

[77] Gary E. McPherson, *The Child as Musician: A Handbook of Musical Development* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2016), 265.

[78] Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves, "Listening to Music at Home and at School," 115.

[79] Suvi Laiho, "The Psychological Functions of Music in Adolescence," *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 13 no. 1 (2004): 59, https://doi.org/10.1080/08098130409478097.

Available literature supports the implication that children's identities are impacted not only by the music they create, but also by the music they consume; especially in today's technology-infused culture, both active and passive musical experiences are forces of influence in children's social development. As with all advancements, the rise of listening in the home comes with intrinsic warnings. It is a matter of careful balance for adults to monitor the media consumption of their children without diminishing the natural enthusiasm and personal agency that is cultivated through exploration. Minks notes that, although media offers "materials for the gradual construction and reconstruction of the self,"[80] it is up to the listener to assemble these influences into their own identity. Listening in the home is where musical idiolects begin. It is where children discover themselves through their choices, and where musical enculturation is strongest. Children feel individual ownership of music strongly in the home as they select and listen on their own terms. As children "eavesdrop" on other cultures through listening, they reform their own identities in response to desired characteristics in the media they observe. Carrying these developments to other contexts permits children to showcase the identities they have formed, seeking confirmation and acceptance among others with similar listening patterns. As music continues to become more easily accessible in the constant soundtrack of children's lives, this influence can only be expected to grow stronger.

Conclusions

Children occupy a challenging cultural niche. They are expected to behave according to standards they did not set, and to maintain the cultural norms of their predecessors while still being expressive and creative within that framework. At play, at school, and at home, children

[80] Minks, "Growing and Grooving to a Steady Beat," 94.

fight an ongoing battle between the instinct to fit in and the desire to stand out. They want to rebel against authority but are not yet independent, and as such, put up only token resistance. As Minks reminds us, childhood is a "site of struggle over representations of sameness, difference, society, and the individual."[81] In fact, to consider "children's musical culture" a single entity is, in itself, misleading; despite their short time to develop a repertoire, children contain musical idiolects as deep and fascinating as those of adults.

Children's musical culture reflects the diverse, contradictory motivations of its constituents and is shaped by inputs from various sources: informal social enculturation through play, formal academic education in school, and self-directed exploration at home. While the venues and opportunities for children's music-making have changed over time, young people have continued to learn, transmit, and create music in its various forms for generations. As the venues for their musical experience continue to shift from outdoor, group play to indoor, private listening, researchers must take notice. What purposes will children's music continue to serve in the future, and which purposes are, as yet, undiscovered? As the children of today become the adults of tomorrow, will they bring new functionality to the music of the next generation? The following study attempts a small investigation into these considerations, centralizing the innately creative nature of children's music and its relationship to stylistic preference. Still, the ethnomusicological study of children and their intrinsically creative behaviors remains poised to be more fully explored.

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[81] Amanda Minks, "From Children's Song to Expressive Practices: Old and New Directions in the Ethnomusicological Study of Children," *Ethnomusicology* 46 (2002): 379, https://doi.org/10.2307/852716.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods used for researching the central research questions, "How do children show ownership of their musical idiolect?" and "Is there a difference in children's ownership behaviors toward self-selected music when compared to adult-selected music?" Subsections of this chapter include descriptions of research design, participants, setting, research procedures, and tools used for data analysis.

Design

Ethnography has been described as an "omnivorous" discipline[82] for its tendency to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methodology within a single project. Following suggestions by LeCompte and Schensul, this study contained elements of quantitative measure as complementary data to confirm patterns of behavior in the group.[83] Quantitative data was used through a population survey and parent survey to inform the researcher regarding students' musical idiolects and musical behaviors at home. A follow-up survey at the end of the fieldwork process provided further quantitative data. Qualitative data was collected through written observation notes by the author, both during and after a musical event. Verbal questioning after targeted events also served to establish narrative data regarding students' experiences.

The research focus of this study was to identify behaviors common in children's interactions with music, or as Creswell proposes, to "describe and interpret a culture sharing

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[82] LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research,* 21.

[83] Ibid., 128.

group"[84] through analysis of their shared patterns of behavior. Because of this central aim, the methodology, analysis, and results are considered components of an ethnographic study. This research elaborated on input from participants to, as LeCompte and Schensul request, "build more effective and socially and culturally valid local theories" which may be tested and adapted for varied groups.[85] This study also contained some recursive elements, using input from initial survey questions to inform the next steps and to generate criteria for observation of student behaviors.

This project was largely concerned with the concept of ownership. In a way, ownership is an externally seeking construct, as musical idiolect is often used to signal identity to others and helps in the formation of social groups. This research called to mind the interpretive paradigm, detailed by Phothongsunan as "the construction of meanings between the participants, one of whom is the researcher himself or herself."[86] This mindset was clearly reflected by the design of this study, which required the facilitator to undergo many of the same steps as the student participants, such as claiming ownership and selecting music for use in classroom activities.

Questions and Hypotheses

Regarding Research Question 1 (how do children demonstrate cultural ownership of music?), it was hypothesized that children would demonstrate participation and creativity when interacting with music from their own idiolects. The research subjects were expected to sing

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[84] John W. Creswell and Cheryl P. Roth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (United States: SAGE Publications, 2016), n.p.,.

[85] Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 1.

[86] Sureepong Phothongsunan, "Interpretive Paradigm in Educational Research," *Galaxy* 2, no. 1 (Oct. 2010), 1, https://repository.au.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/dc6d9ea5-e96a-4a64-a744-767904b3b73c/content.

along, move their bodies while listening, and show creativity when responding to their preferred music types. Naturally, a drop in engagement was anticipated when students interacted with musical examples from outside of their music cultures, indicating a lack of ownership toward these types. Disengagement can be seen through an absence of engagement behaviors such as singing along and moving, but it can also be observed through other behaviors and body language such as failure to make eye contact, frequent yawning, facing away from the researcher during instruction, and reluctance to answer questions posed in class. Engagement and disengagement behaviors are detailed in Appendix D: Engagement Monitoring Key. Observation of these behaviors facilitated an examination of the second research question: is there a difference in the way children interact with music of their own choosing as compared to music of a teacher's choosing?

Participants in the Study

The Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls (Brighter Choice) in Albany, New York contains female students from kindergarten to fifth grade, between the ages of four and thirteen. Brighter Choice is a free, Title I public school. 77% of learners are economically disadvantaged at the time of the study. The two primary ethnicities represented at the school were Black (63%) and Hispanic (18%). The population of English Language Learners comprised 11% of the student population. In addition, Brighter Choice had a relatively high turnover rate for students, with less than half of its scholars attending the school for a full six years from kindergarten to fifth grade.

All scholars at the school participated in music classes at the time of the study, with the exception of one who was exempt for religious purposes. Each grade level contained either two

or three classes of approximately twenty scholars each, creating a school population of roughly 300. This research required students to discuss their own musical preferences and describe their musical behaviors, both orally and in writing. The youngest children at the school would have struggled to perform the chosen writing tasks. Fifth grade had music class scheduled for the early morning, and many students from these classes were pulled for services at this time or were late to school, leading to an inconsistent population. The subjects of this study, then, were third and fourth grade students.

A total of sixty research subjects were enrolled in the study. Of these students, 35 were third graders and 25 were fourth graders. Seven students were emergent bilinguals enrolled in the English Language Learner program, with home languages of Spanish (1 student), Bangla (2 students), Burmese (2 students), and Pashtu (2 students).

Setting

In matters of ethnography, local specificity is paramount in generating an accurate view of the behaviors demonstrated by a chosen culture.[87] Brighter Choice is situated in the city of Albany and permits enrollment of students from Albany and its surrounding metropolitan area. Most students lived in Albany at the time of the study, with a high percentage living very close to the building and forgoing the bus to walk to school. All students lived within 20 miles of the school. This setting was restrictive enough to garner a locally specific view of children's music culture with many shared patterns of behavior.

The temporal setting of this fieldwork in autumn positioned the study at the beginning of the students' school year. This was chosen purposefully so that students would encounter these

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[87] LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research,* 1.

explorations of their musical preferences as relationship building activities, something this population completed with each of their subject teachers as part of Brighter Choice's "pre-season" unit of routines and procedures in September. This helped to establish this study as natural and exploratory, rather than probing or intrusive, as it may have seemed later in the year.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Methods

Mirroring the sentiments of Phothongsunan referenced on page 27, LeCompte and Schensul note early in their description of ethnographic research that the facilitator constitutes the "primary tool of data collection."[88] Their statement suits the style of this study, which was reliant on few specialized tools beyond a smartphone, laptop, and their associated apps and software. Audio was played using my laptop, sometimes using the Transpose extension on Google Chrome to place songs in an appropriate key for singing or playing instruments. This extension was also used to slow down songs for practice purposes. Classroom observations were recorded in a notebook. The brunt of the fieldwork process was carried not by the introduction of specialized technology or unconventional teaching strategies, but by extensions and redirections of typical general music class activities.

This study consisted of three main stages: initial survey, classroom observation, and final survey. The initial survey was delivered to child subjects to explore the child's musical idiolect. The survey specifically sought information about the child's musical likes and dislikes, typical responses to liked and disliked music, and musical behaviors exhibited in the home such as singing, dancing, body percussion, listening independently, and making up new music (see Appendix A). Using the results of this initial survey (Appendix B), the researcher was able to

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[88] Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 1.

conduct classroom observations on the behaviors of students toward music from each class' most popularly liked genres. Students were tasked to move, sing, play instruments, and given opportunities to create within the framework of music in their preferred genres. This phase of research lasted for five 45-minute-long music classes. Following this, students completed similar activities but conducted these activities using music from genres that were either disliked by many in the class or not mentioned by any members of the class. This phase lasted for five further classes. Following these ten observation periods, the final survey asked students to reflect on their experiences during the study. Students were tasked to select their favorite activity from a list of those carried out during the fieldwork process, explaining why they enjoyed it the most. Scholars were also asked to identify any songs or pieces which they would listen to again at home, and state whether they would like to share any songs from the classroom with friends or family.

Procedures

The initial steps in fieldwork involved obtaining parental consent and child assent for the study. Following this, a survey regarding musical preferences and behaviors was administered to scholars to determine a baseline library of genres and artists in students' musical idiolects. These responses were collected and tallied for a comprehensive list of extant ownership behaviors in students. This also assisted in the compilation of a list of genres, artists, and songs that were popular among multiple students to assist in the exploration of Research Question 2.

In the classroom, the researcher conducted observations of students' interaction with musical examples. Genres and artists popular to multiple scholars, derived from the initial surveys, were included in the classroom for movement, playing, and singing activities.

Observations regarding students' engagement with these activities were recorded and compared to observations on similar activities that utilize adult-selected music.

At the end of the fieldwork period, students were provided with a follow-up survey. This asked scholars to identify whether the examples of teacher-selected music in the classroom qualified as part of their musical idiolect as defined by the behaviors identified in the initial survey. Clarifying questions were asked as needed after surveys were returned.

Research Positionality

The success of this project is predicated on a trusting relationship between the participants and the researcher. As part of the fieldwork process, students were required to share some personal information regarding their home musical behaviors which, though not necessarily private, is socially vulnerable.

The positionality of the researcher as a teacher and authority figure is important to consider as well. It is possible that the process of observing these cultural expressions, especially those that are typically private, influences the performance of these behaviors. This researcher strives to balance instances of structured, classroom music with occurrences of music at play in the students' unstructured time, such as recess. In addition, the researcher adopts elements of the Orff-Schulwerk pedagogy, a teaching philosophy centered on features of play,[89] to reduce the impact of institutional structure and researcher positionality on the results of the study. Nevertheless, these barriers do exist in the classroom and must be considered in data analysis. An intriguing central question for future study may then appear: Can an adult encourage children

[89] American Orff-Schulwerk Association, "What is Orff Schulwerk?," last modified 2022, https://aosa.org/about/what-is-orff-schulwerk/.

to demonstrate the level and type of ownership seen through play while working in a structured, classroom environment?

Data Analysis

The initial survey responses were paramount in considering Research Question 1. Student behaviors with self-selected music were compiled into a list and tallied for frequency, resulting in a comprehensive list of significant ownership behaviors demonstrated at home. Applied recursively, this pattern identification also provided a list of behaviors to inform the exploration of Research Question 2 as the researcher sought these spontaneous responses from students as evidence of ownership.

In the examination of Research Question 2, observations were critical in determining students' attitudes toward self-selected music and adult-selected music. Engagement in a variety of musical activities was one clue toward students' ownership of the material. Engagement can be measured by observing the willingness of students to move, sing, and play in the presence or production of different musical examples. Body language such as smiling, eye contact, and spontaneous movements during listening may also act as indicators of students' preference for the material, which constituted a critical factor in their ownership of musical examples. Also, the students' propensity for creativity hinted at cultural claiming as well, with students more likely to invent new movements or lyrics and modify instrumental parts toward preferred styles of music.

Responses to follow-up questioning were used to observe patterns in ownership behaviors toward adult-selected music. These responses were again collected and tallied to show the relative frequency of the chosen behaviors. In conjunction with the researcher's observations,

this identified discrepancies between scholars' exhibition of ownership behaviors toward adult-selected and scholar-selected music, answering Research Question 2. The presence and strength of this discrepancy were illustrated by percentages of participant responses.

Chapter Four: Results

This study focused on the analysis of children's ownership behaviors toward music of two binary, though not mutually exclusive, types: self-selected and teacher-selected. The comparison of children's interactions with these two categories of music first required an understanding of the genres most commonly selected by the research population. This information was gained through the initial student surveys sent home in September, which established a collection of music types suitable to serve as self-selected examples during the study. Once these samples were used in the classroom and observed to set a baseline of ownership behaviors, it was then possible to compare these known musics to unknown, or even disliked, musical types. This was again achieved through observation and questioning in the classroom. A final questionnaire surveyed the extent to which students exhibited ownership behaviors toward non-self-selected musical examples to conclude the study. The following constitutes a summarization of the research findings based on the four research stages described above: initial survey, classroom use of self-selected music, classroom use of non-self-selected music, and final survey.

Initial Survey and Interview Results

Uncovering Ownership Behaviors

The initial survey delivered to participants assisted in two research goals: generating a list of common ownership behaviors demonstrated by children and generating a list of genres, artists, and songs that best outline the musical idiolects of the population. The results of the first goal are expressed below, and results from the second are found in the following subsection. The blank survey and comprehensive responses can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

An understanding of student ownership behaviors was first informed by examining the question, “When you’re at home and a song comes on that you like, what do you do?” Overall results are shown below:

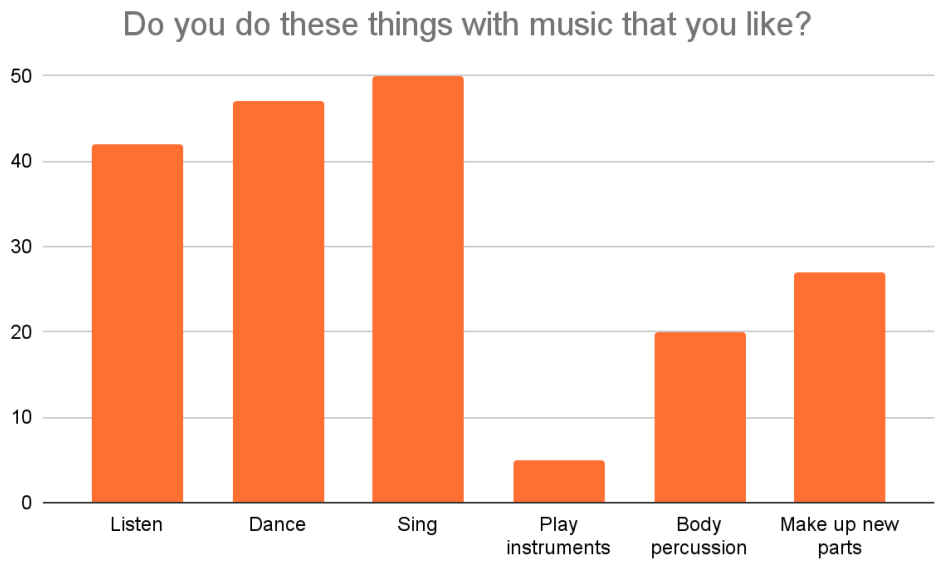

Figure 1: Responses to initial survey question #3

The primary ownership behaviors recognized by students were choosing to listen to a song, singing along, and dancing, all of which were mentioned by over 70% of the participants. Making up new parts to songs was mentioned by 45% of respondents, and using body percussion by 33% of respondents, constituting relatively prevalent ownership behaviors. Playing instruments was mentioned quite seldom, with only 8% of participants demonstrating this behavior at home. In addition, the question, “What do you do when you hear music that you don’t like?” was used to gauge the verbal and nonverbal cues that could be expected from students when engaging with music from outside of their music culture. Responses to this question are shown on the following page:

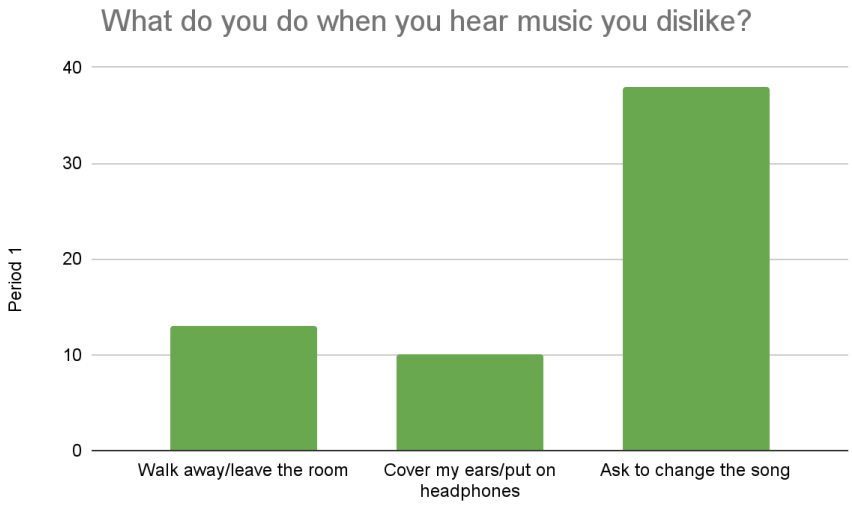

Figure 2: Responses to initial survey question #8

In this case, the two main answer types resorted immediately to either avoidance or reselection; 23 of 60 participants said that they would walk away, cover their ears/put on headphones, or leave the room, and 38 of 60 participants said that they would ask the person controlling the music to change the song. (Let it not be said that children's manners are deteriorating in the modern age- eight out of 38 participants requesting a song change specifically stipulated that they would either say "please" or would otherwise ensure that their request was "polite.")

One interesting phenomenon that surfaced at this time was the need for participants to have their particular experience with a song known by their peers. For instance, when engaging with the song "Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)," one student told the class that the song "was from her mom's radio." At this point, other students began calling out to say that, no, this wasn't a radio song. This was "the song from that TikTok" or "the song from the troll movie" instead. Scholars began to disagree with each other, each insinuating that her history with the song was the only correct experience. This sparked a discussion about the various uses of media, and how one song can be discoverable by a variety of people in many different, but all equally valid, ways. In their own fashion, students seemed to recognize the importance of cultural ownership as

a marker of identity throughout the fieldwork process. While participants sometimes struggled to maintain engagement while interfacing with songs that were unfamiliar or songs that they disliked, they typically would not verbalize a negative opinion toward a song unless directly asked to express their feelings on the selection. Additionally, students frequently apologized when expressing that they disliked a song used in class, explaining that they did not want to offend others in the class or the researcher who chose the activities.

Gathering Preferred Genres and Music Types

To empower the recursive design of this project, student-selected music examples needed to align with genres, types, and artists typically preferred by the research subjects. Students' musical interests were examined using the initial survey, along with verbal questions during class that refined results and generated a pool of musical examples for use during later procedures. The first survey question focused on students' genre preferences:

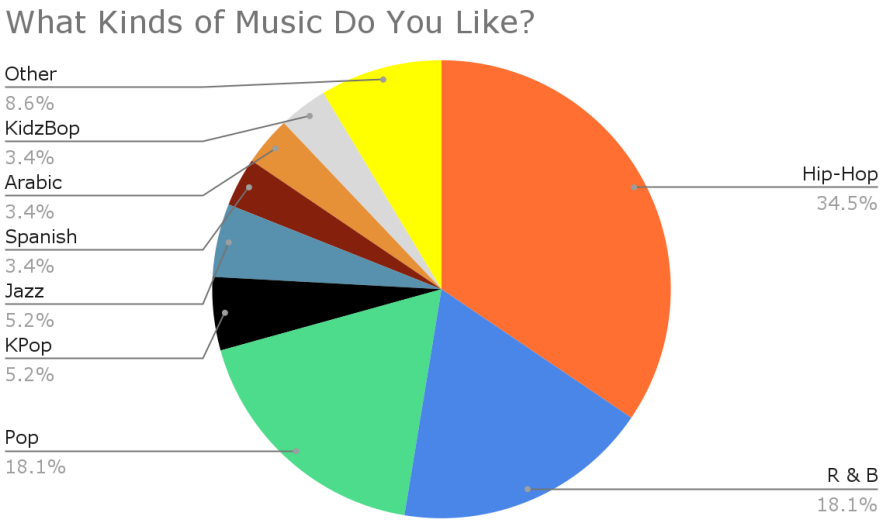

Figure 3: Responses from initial survey question #1

The most popular genres overall were hip-hop, R&B, and pop. Some classes surveyed had "outlier" genres which were popular among a group of students within one class without achieving plurality on the overall survey results. For example, all six students who listed K-pop as a preferred genre were in the same third grade class, indicating that 17% of students in that class preferred K-pop and inserting K-pop as the third most-liked genre for that group. All four students who listed Arabic music as a preferred genre were in the same fourth-grade class, comprising 20% of those students and placing Arabic music as the third favorite genre of the class. Strongly disliked genres also contained outliers as well, with K-pop occupying a surprisingly polarizing position among the research subjects. Whereas one third grade class displayed unusual proclivity toward K-pop, one fourth grade class contained eight scholars, or 38% of the class, who expressed dislike for the genre. Data regarding the overall trends in disliked music can be seen here:

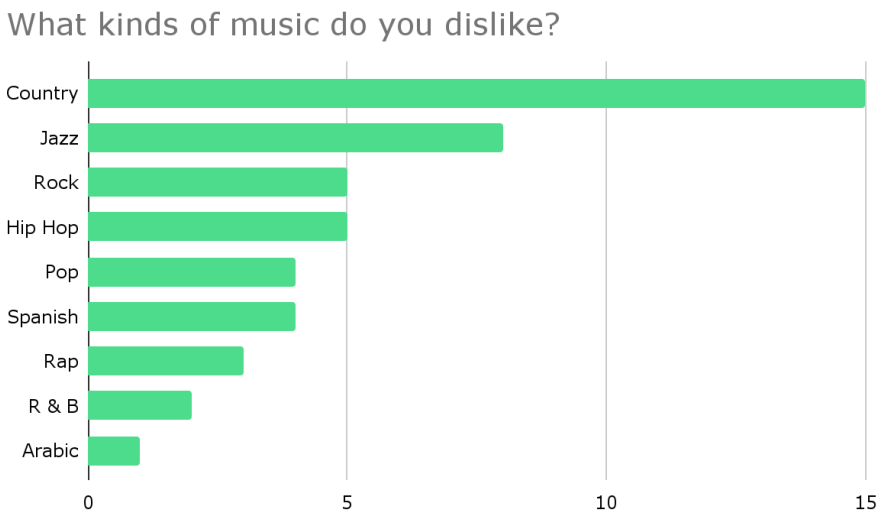

Figure 4: Responses to initial survey question #7

In the overall population of respondents, the investigation of least favored genres yielded one extreme outlier, with 25% of participants specifically disliking country music. The next most common response was jazz, with 13% of respondents expressing dislike for the genre.

Individual questioning and cooperative learning activities helped to establish opinions for individual pieces of music as they were introduced in the classroom. For example, when first interacting with the song "Stuck Like Glue," scholars engaged in the Kagan Cooperative Learning structure "Mix-Pair-Share" to discuss their opinions with a variety of students in the class. In this activity, scholars read a question and walked around the room while listening. When the music paused, scholars found a partner and told their answer to that question. The researcher circulated around the room to hear answers from various groups to questions such as "What genre of music is this?," "Where do you think people play this kind of music?," and "Do you like this song? Why or why not?" During whole group activities such as this, nonverbal signals helped to quickly gauge group trends in addition to the individual responses heard while circulating the room. A nonverbal, informal rating system helped to gauge students' interest in each piece. A thumbs-up signal meant that the student enjoyed the song, would like to know the name of it so they could hear it again, and would share that song with a family member or a friend. A thumb pointed sideways indicated that the student felt ambivalent about the song and didn't feel the need to hear it again. A thumbs down showed that the student did not like the song and wished it hadn't been played the first time. In the classroom, this rating system was colloquially referred to as "yeah, meh, or bleh." Students were able to quickly show their interest in each piece, and the instructor could quickly tally the thumbs in each category to collect this data. Other iterations of the cooperative learning process were used as well. "Write-Pair-Share" structures allowed participants to write down their emotional responses to musical examples

before verbalizing these thoughts to a partner in order to experience differing perspectives from classmates. Collecting the papers from scholars also permitted the teacher to see trends in the whole group's affective responses to the song. This is how the outlying dislike for K-pop (referenced above, pg. 37) was discovered in one fourth grade class.

In addition to the survey results, a simple movement activity was introduced to all classes. This game used several genres of music and allowed the researcher to informally poll each class and determine their thoughts on various examples. The movement activity, called "Steady Beat Detective," required one scholar to lead movements to music which all others in the group copied. Another student was tasked to discover who the leader was by tracking the movements of the group. Before selecting student leaders, the researcher led a "practice round" of the activity where all were instructed to copy the movements created by the instructor. After this round, the researcher and students reviewed the movements used to establish a "safe set" of movements that leaders could utilize when it was their turn. At this time, the teacher also stressed that students were welcome to create moves at any time and incorporate them into their repertoire. This allowed students the opportunity to show creativity if they desired but also permitted students to retreat to a familiar set of options if they were unable or unwilling to engage creatively with the given musical example. This activity featured a variety of songs from genres that students listed as liked and as disliked on the initial survey. Each time the activity was played, three songs were chosen as backing music. Students were permitted to decide which song they would like to try before each round using a nonverbal signal of 1, 2, or 3 fingers to show their preference. This again collected a quick, informal understanding of which types of music students enjoyed the most. It was possible to tell which students were most engaged in a given song by the number of students who raised their hands to volunteer for a turn in the game.

It was through this activity and related questioning that students' dislike for old music was established. While only three students mentioned a distaste for "old music" on their initial surveys, this was soon established to be a widely avoided category in students' musical idiolects. Students were not able to reliably discern what musical examples were truly older than others, basing their judgment of the music's age on their perception of its similarity to known contemporary music. In these activities, many musical examples perceived as having an old sound, such as Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," Dave Brubeck's "Take Five," or Ratatat's "Cream on Chrome," were quickly judged by scholars as uninteresting and dismissed from their musical idiolects. These qualities were prioritized when selecting music for later creative activities designed to probe student reactions to disliked or unfamiliar music styles.

It was through this activity that students revealed their affinity for music from familiar movies. Both "Despicable Me" and "Traveling Song" (from the movie *Madagascar*) were voted as widely liked by all classes, and leaders showed creativity in their movements. For example, one third grader used stomping, shuffling, and crossed arm poses with a scowling facial expression while leading movements to "Despicable Me." After her turn, she was asked to explain where her moves came from and what inspired them. She replied, "I have no idea. I did one move to start and then I felt the song. I listened to the attitude in the song and then I made my own." The same scholar was also outraged when I switched to another song option, loudly exclaiming, "You turned off my jam!" In addition to movie music, students also acknowledged a preference for music known through TikTok, which 21 students mentioned in their initial surveys. Knowing these predilections toward movie music and songs featured on TikTok drove several choices in subsequent activities, encouraging the selection of Wham's "Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)" (known from TikTok), Anna Kendrick's "When I'm Gone" (from *Pitch*

Perfect) and Dua Lipa's "Dance the Night" (known from TikTok and the movie *Barbie*) as the canvas for creative play in later classes. The first explorations into student ownership behaviors utilized these and other liked songs, allowing the students to exhibit expressive musical behavior within the confines of their familiar genres and styles.

Ownership Behaviors toward Self-Selected Music

Movement Activities

The most accessible and elemental way in which students can show musical creativity is through movement. Movement is inextricably tied to emotion in young people, with both premeditated and extemporaneous movements serving to illuminate the emotional state of the child. All kinesthetic expressions, from "a turning spin in a creative dance as well the exuberant leap of a gleeful child" to "the inward turned attention and diminished movement vitality in depression,"[90] relay this critical affective information. Researchers have long recognized the automatic movement response toward music which allows for natural means of expression; Professor of Music Education Carlos Abril points out this significant link between music and movement, affirming, "clearly, humans are predisposed to respond to the properties of music through bodily movement. As such, movement is an integral component of musical experience, cutting across time, culture, and geography."[91] To begin the examination of student-selected music, low-stakes opportunities for movement were introduced, allowing students to

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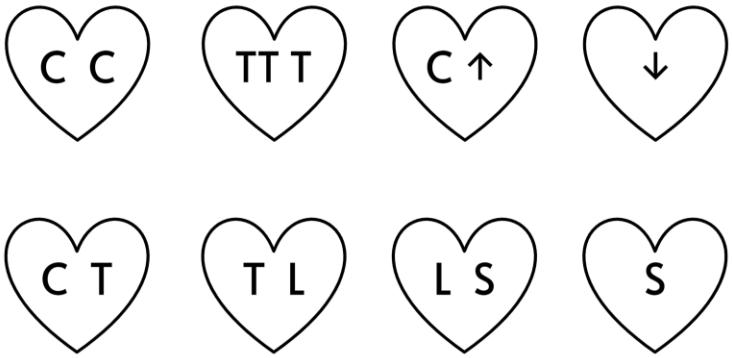
[90] Dianne Dulicai and Ellen Schelly Hill, "Expressive Movement," in *Low-Cost Approaches to Promote Physical and Mental Health,* ed. Luciano L'Abate (New York, NY: Springer, 2007), 177, https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36899-X_9.

[91] Carlos R. Abril, "Music, Movement, and Learning," in *MENC Handbook of Research on Music Learning: Volume 2: Applications,* ed. Richard Colwell and Peter R. Webster (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93.

explore movement choices as a solo and in a group. Activities in this section of the unit included the game “Steady Beat Detective” (explained on pg. 40) and improvisatory movement to music in student-selected genres. After its initial debut, “Steady Beat Detective” became a warm-up during the first five minutes of subsequent sessions, first employing student-selected music before serving to introduce teacher-selected examples. A natural extension of this movement followed, where students used props- in this case, plastic cups- to create a movement routine inspired by Anna Kendrick’s “When I’m Gone.”

In this activity, scholars were taught a simple, eight-beat routine with the movements clap, pat the legs, snap, tap the cup, pick it up, and put it down. Students practiced and performed this routine with the song “When I’m Gone.” Once students attained proficiency with these movements, they were permitted to self-select groups of any size to work with and encouraged to explore the different movements they could create for ten minutes. During this time, they received no direct instruction from the researcher, but several groups were asked to teach the researcher the new movements they had invented. Scholars were then given the opportunity to improvise with these new movements while listening to a second song, Wham’s “Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go).” Following this improvisation, students composed their own eight-bar movement phrases. The researcher taught students how to record their movements on a piece of paper using iconic notation. Each group of scholars received a worksheet with eight blank heart shapes on it, where scholars already know that the heart represents the steady beat of the music. The following is the example used to demonstrate, showing the original 8-beat phrase created by the researcher:



Key: C = clap, T = Tap cup, ↑ = pick up the cup, ↓ = put the cup down, S = snap

Figure 5: Example iconic notation for cup song

The only compositional advice given to students was to consider the tempo and avoid creating beats with too many movements. Students agreed that placing two moves in a beat (or an eighth-note rhythm) was acceptable, and three moves were acceptable if all three were the same, but sixteenth-note rhythms were unperformably fast at the given tempo. Participants could include any new movements that their group created but were also told that they could simply keep the same movements from the teacher's example and "scramble" them to create a new composition by changing the order of performance. During the composition process, student groups were permitted to ask questions regarding notation and composition but were not given any unsolicited guidance. If scholars requested help deciding between two movements, choosing the best order, or practicing their routine, the researcher used guided questioning to assist the group in making a choice. However, all final choices were left for the students to decide.

In this activity, students maintained a high level of engagement throughout. Students all remained seated or standing with their groups, made eye contact with the group member who was speaking, and attempted to complete movement options with their groups. Most participants asked questions in their groups and suggested improvements to the composition if needed. The

classroom was filled with smiling and laughing, and the researcher did not have to assist any classes with peer conflicts. There were six noticeable peer conflicts throughout the composition process, but scholars were able to solve these themselves by compromising on which moves to include, asking group members politely to move over, or creating two separate routines to incorporate all ideas. One pair of scholars, Amaya and Madison, frequently struggled to work together in their homeroom. They chose to work together with a third student who was a mutual friend, but the third scholar was pulled from the class period for academic services for most of the class, leaving Amaya and Madison to work as a pair. Both were uninterested in inventing new movements or rearranging the existing options to complete the assignment, displaying the frustrated body language of crossed arms, turning slightly away from the other, and declining to speak for about two minutes. I gave all scholars a group reminder of the given directions, then played the song for the activity "Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)" while students practiced. Within three minutes, Amaya and Madison were smiling and laughing, and they had created multiple original movements for their routine. When the third scholar returned to their group after academic services, Madison and Amaya collaborated to teach her the work that she had missed. Aside from this conflict, groups throughout all classes maintained a fluid nature informed by the creative output of the scholars. One group chose to split from a single set of four members into two sets of partners while composing in order to accommodate the different ideas requested by each of the members. In another instance, two groups of four were standing next to each other while practicing and were interested in the movements created by their neighbors. After teaching each other their routines, these groups chose to combine and create a conglomeration of their two routines into one final product. This independent decision-making is

a reflection of student productivity, demonstrating the participants' sense of efficacy during the activity by adjusting its parameters to suit the needs of the group.

In addition to demonstrating engagement and agency throughout this process, students also showed remarkable creativity in their compositions. Out of 22 student groups throughout the various classes, only three groups chose to keep the same movements from the example and change the order instead of creating their own, new options. The 19 groups that chose to invent new movements generated a wide array of options including throwing the cup in the air, flicking the cup off of the hand with the fingertips, stacking the group's cups into a pyramid, making a heart shape with the hands, tapping the cup together with a neighbor's, sliding the cup across the floor, spinning the cup on the floor, spinning the cup on the hands, spinning the body, and chanting rhythmic phrases while jumping.

This creativity was noted through "Steady Beat Detective" as well. Out of 34 students selected as movement leaders toward student-selected music, 26 of them displayed an original motion at least once in their turn. When questioned, scholar leaders often justified their movement choices by referencing qualities from the music. Scholars would justify their choices by saying that they "went with" the music or "made sense" with what they were hearing. Overall, the movements were congruous with the styles and moods presented in the music. For example, scholars demonstrated energetic hip-hop movements to Pharrell Williams' "Happy," joyful actions such as jumping and fist pumping to Shakira's "Try Everything," and movements showing grumpiness or attitude to fit Pharrell Williams' "Despicable Me." After her turn as leader with the song "Try Everything," one student explained, "I knew the song was upbeat and I wanted to do happy moves that work with the song."

Instrumental Activities

Whereas movement is an easily accessible and intuitive way for children to demonstrate musical creativity, instrument playing offers several challenges barring natural expression. Children are able to practice expressive movement and singing constantly at home, but not all may use instruments outside of school. In their initial surveys, only 8% of participants claimed to play instruments in response to music they enjoy. This is due in part to instrument availability and financial difficulties but likely is also due to developmental concerns. Children learn to move their own bodies and control their own voices before they are able to demonstrate the fine and gross motor skills needed for instrument playing. Even after early developmental milestones have been reached in infancy, advanced skills involving crossing the midline and use of tools such as mallets continue to prove difficult for years thereafter. Time does not automatically instill such knowledge into children's minds and bodies as they age; rather, children also require opportunities to use these skills in order to refine them. Barela reports, "The belief that maturation was the only driving factor of motor development in the early years is slowly fading away,"[92] insisting that experiences involving varied motor tasks are also essential for the refinement of motor abilities. The ramifications of this increased difficulty were seen throughout the use of instrumental activities in class.

Students were guided through xylophone activities using the steps of the Orff Schulwerk process: observe, imitate, explore, improvise, compose.[93] To begin, scholars observed the

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[92] José Angelo Barela, "Fundamental motor skill proficiency is necessary for children's motor activity inclusion," *Motriz: Revista de Educação Física* 19, no. 3 (2013): 549, https://doi.org/10.1590/S1980-65742013000300003.

[93] Amy Beagle and Judith Bond, "Releasing and Developing the Musical Imagination," in *Teaching General Music: Approaches, Issues, and Viewpoints,* ed. Carlos R. Abril and Brent M. Gault (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29.

teacher's model of playing technique before engaging in a class discussion to identify key elements of posture and tone production. Then, participants imitated simple patterns of four quarter notes played by the researcher, such as "C G G G" and "F G G G," without notation. Once scholars could demonstrate these patterns on a steady beat without teacher guidance, the students were shown iconic notation for the patterns and played these repeatedly while listening to Dua Lipa's "Dance the Night." The song was transposed up 2 half steps using the Google Chrome extension, "Transpose," and all xylophones were set up with the bars C, F, G, and A# to coincide with its tone set. After this, students were encouraged to explore the xylophone while listening to the song, receiving only the guidance to "stay on the steady beat" while playing. Because of the restricted tone set of the instruments, it was impossible for students to create a discordant pattern; one participant noted, "Everything we play sounds pretty good."

Following this, students each received a dry erase board designed to help them compose a xylophone part for the song. The boards were arranged in the following manner:

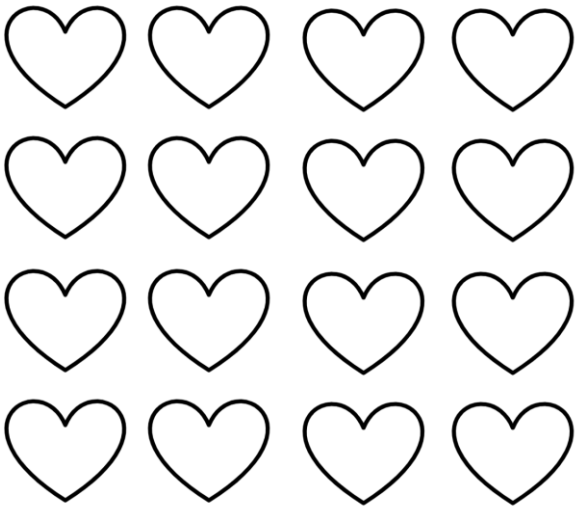

Figure 6: Setup for student dry erase boards

The 16 heart shapes arranged in four rows indicated the number of steady beats present in the song's A section, organized in four quadruple measures. In composing, students were permitted

to copy up to two rows of material that had been played already in class but were required to create at least two rows of their own. A visual representation of the material already played was projected onto the board while students were composing:

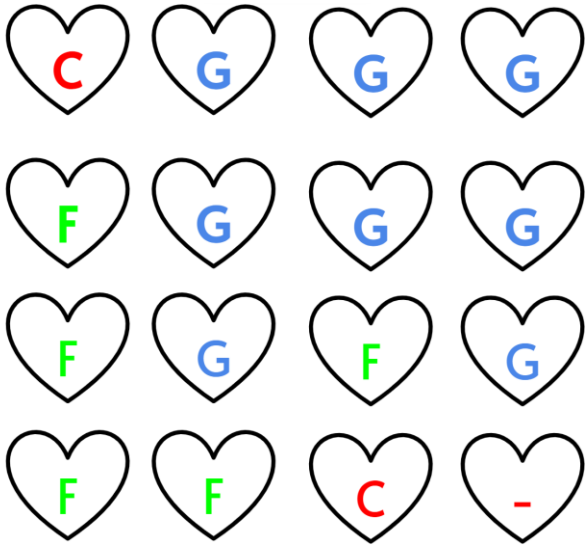

Figure 7: Xylophone melodic material displayed by the instructor

There was a ten-minute composition period where participants could form a rough draft, talk to other scholars in the class, and test out their compositions on the xylophone before performing them along with "Dance the Night." The instructor provided guidance to ensure compositions were playable but did not otherwise alter students' creations. Advice given to scholars included the suggestion to avoid large melodic leaps and to avoid making the compositions too difficult by playing more than two notes in the same beat. After drafting and performing their compositions, students were permitted to make adjustments in a short editing period before performing the final draft. At the end of the class, scholars were asked to leave their work on their boards before handing them in to the instructor. Students were also asked to write their rating of the song "out of 5 stars" in the top right corner of their board, where 1 star indicates a strong dislike, 3 indicates no strong positive or negative opinion, and 5 indicates a strong

preference. Students' self-reported level of enjoyment for "Dance the Night" is tabled on the following page:

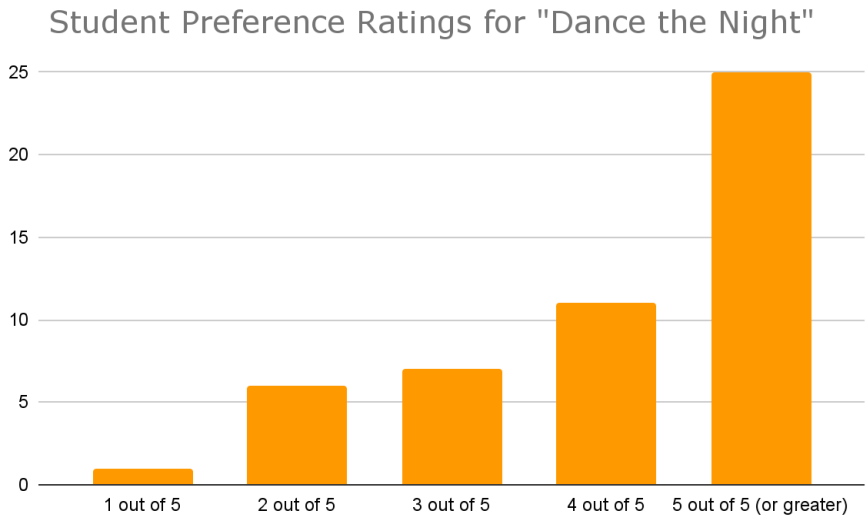

Figure 8: Student Preference Ratings for "Dance the Night"

Within the column of students who rated the piece as "5 out of 5" were six students who rated the piece higher than the maximum value. When questioned, each of these students explained that they loved the song so much that their enjoyment could not be summarized within the parameters of the five-star rating system, instead rating the song as "6," "9+," "10," "100," "1000," and "∞." Surveying students' compositions and ratings revealed that, regardless of preference for the song, scholars were inclined to display similar levels of creativity in their compositions.

Out of 60 participants, only three scholars chose to copy two rows from the board. 12 scholars chose to copy one phrase from the board, and the remaining 45 composed entirely new material without copying any phrases that had been played as a group. It is interesting to note that the three students who chose to limit their creativity by copying two precomposed phrases all rated the piece as "5 out of 5 stars." Out of the 12 scholars who copied one phrase from the

instructor, the lowest rating was a 3 out of 5, and the 12 ratings averaged to 4.3 out of 5. This indicates that their decision to copy the phrase did not stem from a lack of interest in the music itself, but instead stemmed from some other source.

One outlier in this analytical structure was Kiara, the only scholar out of sixty who rated "Dance the Night" with one star out of five. Kiara chose not to copy any material from the board, and while this may first seem like a mark of unexpected inspiration toward a disliked piece, Kiara's composition belies this assumption. Taking a path of extreme least resistance, Kiara chose to write the tonic in every beat to compose an A section built entirely of quarter note Cs. Her explanation for the uninventive work was that she was "tired" and "didn't really feel like doing it." When personally encouraged by the researcher to attempt a true composition with more than a single note, Kiara then erased the second and fourth phrases of her work to replace them with precomposed patterns from the board. Kiara's treatment of the task shows an understandable reluctance toward a disliked piece of music, one which many adults would likely share. Overall, however, students' affinity for the song did not impact their decision to act creatively, as shown by the relatively high ratings given by students who chose to copy half the piece.

Ownership Behaviors toward Teacher-Selected Music

Movement Activities

Similarly to the unit of student-selected music, the series of lessons on music outside of the students' ownership began with movement. Again, students played "Steady Beat Detective" as a chance to demonstrate solo movement. They also formed groups to invent a hand-clapping routine along with teacher-selected music. The genres and examples chosen were selected from

the pool of students' disliked genres, focusing on the most widely listed disliked genres of country and jazz. In classroom observations, it was also noted that about thirty students claimed to dislike music when it "sounded old." Therefore, many of the chosen songs were selected for their age; out of ten songs, two ("Take Five" by the Dave Brubeck Quartet and "Johnny B. Goode" by Chuck Berry) were from the 1950s, three ("Jessica" by The Allman Brothers Band, "Root Beer Rag" by Billy Joel, and "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" by Queen) were from the 1970s, one ("Walk of Life" by Dire Straits) was from the 1980s, and one ("MacAnanty's Reel" by the Irish Chamber Orchestra) was from the 1990s.

In their explorations with individual movements when playing "Steady Beat Detective," the students still displayed similar levels of creativity as they did when performing known and liked music. Out of 32 students chosen to be the "movement leader" during this activity, only seven chose to imitate motions created by the instructor rather than creating their own. While scholars still demonstrated creative movements toward these unknown or unliked genres, their movements were less musically effective than those created for known and liked genres. Understandably, scholars who created original movements to the music of unfamiliar genres tended to compose actions that were incongruous with the style of the chosen song. For example, one scholar showed a disco-style motion when dancing to Brubeck's "Take Five." Another participant chose to incorporate the TikTok craze to "get sturdy" in response to Taylor Swift's "You Belong with Me." In addition, scholars often repeated one movement for a long time instead of changing it frequently, showing a lack of interest. Often, after the leader was finished with her turn, I would ask her if she liked the song being played. When the leader did enjoy the song, she typically changed her movement once every other measure of music, and usually did so in time, with new movements falling on the first beat of a phrase. When leaders did not enjoy

the song, they typically changed their movement choice every four or five bars, and often did so out of time, with new movements beginning off the beat or in a weak beat of the measure. This phenomenon occurred in all disliked examples, not only in those examples with asymmetric meters. Scholar leaders who enjoyed the song also had longer turns than those who disliked the song playing. Leaders who enjoyed the song would remain engaged and look around the room while choosing their movements. This would allow the leader to change movements purposefully when the "detective" student was looking elsewhere. When this occurred, the leader would be able to select more actions because they were harder to catch in the act of switching, thereby giving the leader a longer turn. Throughout this activity, students often voted collectively on a song choice using an informal system (described on pg. 39). When songs from commonly disliked genres or artists were playing, students voted to change the song often. When songs within students' preferred genres were played, the same song was permitted for use up to three turns in a row before that option was removed and scholars were mandated to select another.

The Steady Beat Detective game allowed for an exploration of individual movements and group reactions to different genres and artists. To examine group movement, participants also formed cohorts of three to six people in order to create clapping patterns to musical examples. To introduce the initial hand-clapping pattern, scholars individually copied the researcher's movements of "clap, up, clap, down." Students clapped their hands together for "clap," extended palms over their heads for "up," and patted the air in front of their torsos for "down." Once scholars could complete this pattern independently without saying the names of the movements, they were instructed to find a partner and connect their hands to their partner's for "up" and "down." When the pair felt confident with this pattern, they joined another pair to make a group of four (or five, in classes with odd numbers). The only advice that was given to students at this

time was that one pair should complete the pattern “clap, up, clap, down” and the other should complete the pattern “clap, down, clap, up.” This way, one pair of scholars would clap above the hands of the others on beat 2 of the measure, then below the hands of the other pair on beat 4. Every scholar clapped her own hands together on beats 1 and 3. Students practiced this for five minutes before trying to complete this pattern in time with the song “Johnny B. Goode.”

Students attempted the unaltered pattern once with the song playing before they were given the option to create their own. Participants were told that they could either choose to practice the pattern they already had in order to refine it, or they could create new movements that they liked better. Their movements were not limited in any way. Lack of engagement was observed throughout the creative process as students began to look away from their groups, became visibly distracted by things in the hallway or out the window, and engaged in conversations unrelated to class activities. Students who asked to use the bathroom during class took four minutes to return. Impressively, one scholar succeeded in quintuple-knotting her shoelaces during whole group instruction. Several students also demonstrated a lack of engagement by failing to offer suggestions to their groups in creative activities, and three groups chose to copy the researcher’s examples instead of creating their own. Still, the finished routines of the participants demonstrated a high level of creativity comparable to the activities involving student-selected music.

In both this activity and the cup song activity, only three scholar groups chose to mimic the instructor’s move set instead of creating a new routine of their own. The degree of creative expression in this activity seemed comparable to that of student-selected music activities as well, with scholars generating a florid list of new movement options including twirling in a circle, initiating a group hug, chanting verbal ostinati while moving, jumping, and holding one hand

behind the back or standing on one leg only while performing. There was still a notable incongruity between the movements selected by the students and the style of the literature chosen. Students continued to demonstrate hip-hop dance movements and dances learned from TikTok even when stylistically inappropriate, such as during country songs and classical pieces.

Instrumental Activities

In addition to the aforementioned movement-based activities, students also completed instrumental activities using xylophones that were designed to probe their creativity toward teacher-selected music. The featured activity for this section of the research process was the improvisation and composition of a xylophone part to Dire Straits' "Walk of Life." This song was commonly disliked throughout all classes, as discovered through a "Write-Pair-Share" activity (see pg. 39). The instrumental hook to the song was its most popular part, with many students dancing along to the keyboard introduction or playing "air guitar" along. The vocal style and delivery were unpopular, causing many students to giggle or make faces while listening. Out of 60 participants, 40 rated the song as 3 stars or below, with common complaints concurring that the song was "old" or "weird."

For this lesson, students first repeated patterns of single notes provided by the instructor, using alternating mallet technique to perform them efficiently. Students were given a short time to explore this technique independently on a xylophone set up in the F major pentatonic scale, noting any patterns of notes they particularly enjoyed playing. They were then asked to teach their favorite pattern of notes to a friend sitting nearby. Students then performed their pattern or their friends' pattern along with the song, "Walk of Life." To promote xylophone playability, the song was pitched up one semitone using the Google Chrome extension, "Transpose." Using the

Engagement Monitoring Key (Appendix D) revealed that students were generally uninterested in the activity; within the twelve participants from one third grade class, eight consistently fell into off-task behavior such as looking in the wrong direction and talking to friends instead of focusing on their work. In addition, when instructed to teach their pattern of notes to a friend in the class, six scholars "taught" their partner a pattern which they had already been shown by the researcher instead of creating their own.

In the next session, students were introduced to the chord bordun, allowing them to perform two pitches simultaneously with their two mallets. Students practiced a bordun of F and C while listening to the song, practicing "jumping" their mallets at the correct times to play on the steady beat. Students were given two minutes to explore the different combinations of notes that they could play with their two mallets, then performed their choice of two notes simultaneously while listening to the song. Students were instructed to teach their chosen chord to another student nearby, then to perform their friends' choice along with the music. Though the introduction of the chord bordun did seem to spark initial interest as students explored the difference between "walking" and "jumping" their mallets on the instrument, these results were short-lived. In one fourth grade class, ten participants were engaged in the performance of chord borduns, smiling and raising their hands to answer questions. However, when the song "Walk of Life" was reintroduced, these same students became less energetic and less engaged, yawning and failing to raise their hands to respond to questions in class.

Rather than focusing on the bars of the instrument while playing and displaying intentional movement of the mallets, about 50% of scholars experienced wandering eyes while playing. This led to students missing the bars with their mallets and hitting the side of the instrument instead, requiring repeated class-wide reminders about playing technique. In addition,

when participants were asked to share their chosen patterns with a friend in the class, scholars were often unable to show any work and chose to discuss off-task matters. Out of the five classes that completed this activity, three classes required teacher intervention at this time, giving them two extra minutes to develop their ideas further and requiring increased monitoring to ensure they maintained on-task discussions when sharing again. After refining their exploratory ideas and sharing them with a partner, students were again asked to write down their final compositions on a whiteboard at the end of class. Their compositions offered a distinct lack of variety and unwillingness to attempt challenging work, showing an overall presence of "bare minimum" effort. For this activity, students were permitted to copy a maximum of two phrases, either from the examples at the board or from the pattern they were taught by their partners. (To identify the patterns created by a partner, scholars were instructed to label that row on their whiteboard with a P.) Whereas only three scholars chose to copy the maximum amount of material when performing "Dance the Night," 20 scholars chose to do so during "Walk of Life."

This lack of compositional creativity can be tied to students' dislike for the piece as a whole. Individual students who displayed a lack of creativity were prompted to explain their choices throughout the compositional process. From the fifteen students questioned individually, several trends emerged in response; six noted that they were trying to complete the work as quickly as possible, five claimed that they weren't concerned with what it sounded like and just wanted something easy to play, and the remaining four said that they didn't know what to write. The average star rating given by these fifteen students to "Walk of Life" was 2.7. Further information regarding students' relative preferences for various types of activities was offered by the final survey results, discussed further below.

Final Survey

The final survey (Appendix F) urged respondents to reflect on their opinions of the activities carried out throughout the fieldwork period. Before completing the survey, each class reviewed what activities had been done during this period and charted them on the projector screen in the classroom. Activities were sorted into two pages of responses: one page containing only activities with student-chosen musical examples, and one containing only activities using teacher-selected music. Participants were tasked to fill out the first page of the survey, which asked only about activities with students-selected music, out of the list of activities on the board at the time. Purely movement-based activities such as the Steady Beat Detective and the hand-clapping routine were the most popular throughout all classes, as is shown by the final survey results toward both student-selected and teacher-selected musical examples:

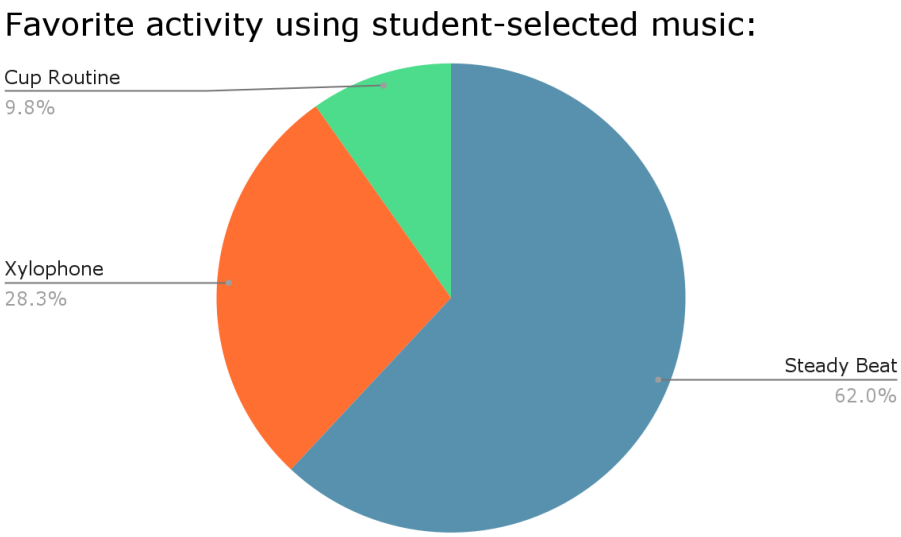

Figure 9: Responses to final survey question #1

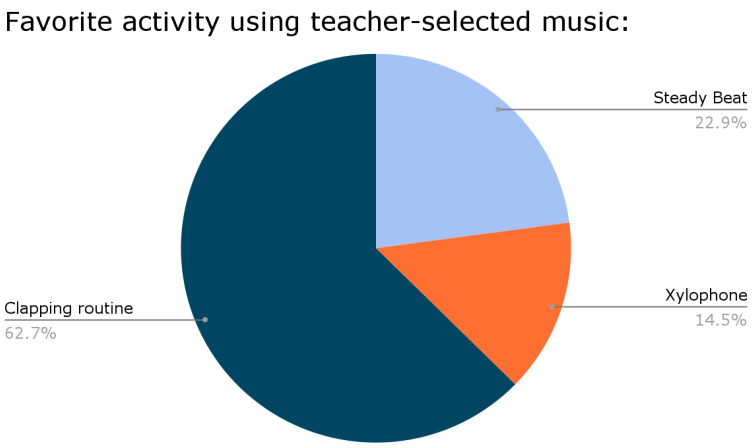

Figure 10: Responses to final survey question #5

Even when participants did not enjoy the songs used in movement activities, they still tended to enjoy the activities themselves. In one fourth grade class, every scholar claimed that the clapping game with "Stuck Like Glue" was their favorite activity, despite 60% of the class self-reporting a dislike for country music on their initial surveys. Preferences for activities seemed to have little to do with their accompanying songs; rather, students tended to gravitate toward movement activities regardless of the song chosen to accompany them.

One interesting trend was the students' general disinclination toward activities featuring the xylophone. The xylophone is an object of particular fascination for students, who often ask when they will play the instrument and will even beg to have a turn. Despite this sanguinity, activities involving the xylophone were consistently voted as "least favorite" on the final fieldwork survey. When combined with student-selected music, half of the students claimed this was their least favorite activity. With teacher-selected music, the preponderance was slightly higher at 52%. Results are shown below and on the following page:

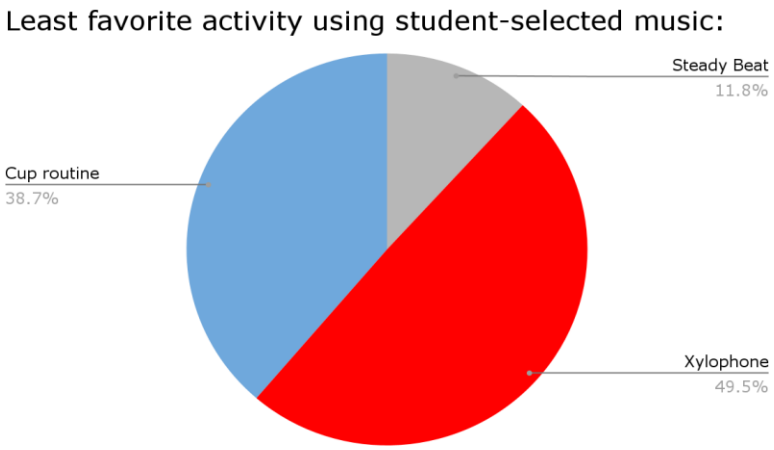

Figure 11: Responses to final survey question #2

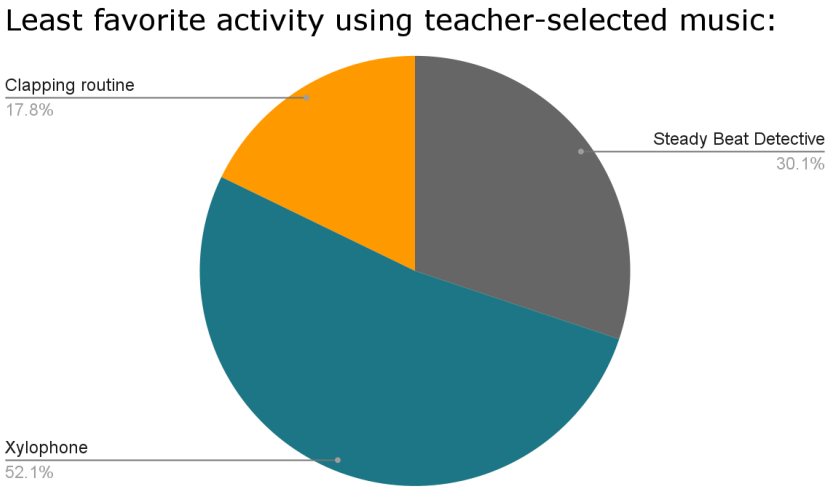

Figure 12: responses to final survey question #6

In their explanations why they did not enjoy these activities, scholars often cited that they were bored while waiting for a turn to play, even though they were given ways to practice or to prepare their compositions while not actively performing on the instruments. Some participants were also upset that the xylophone was a challenge, expressing frustration when their compositions did not fully express their musical intent. As one participant explained, “it was hard to remember my part and it didn’t really go with the song.” This forms an interesting

contrast with the movement-based incongruity seen in the Steady Beat Detective activity (pg. 45). When playing the xylophone, students quickly noticed if their own performance did not fit the style of the song and viewed this as an obstacle toward artistic expression. In the Steady Beat Detective, students often created movements that were artistically incompatible with the chosen song- such as dancing disco while listening to Dave Brubeck- and did not seem to mind the disconnect. It was then noted that students' conflicting movements were an expression of their unfamiliarity with teacher-selected genres. When using the xylophone in student-selected musical activities, however, this feeling of incongruity could not stem from unfamiliarity with the music. Perhaps the instrument itself is the culprit instead, and this disenchantment with the xylophone stems instead from the inclusion of the mallets and instruments which place an inherent barrier between the body and the expression of musical ideas. Whereas a student may immediately express a movement idea or a vocal idea without significant delays in processing, performing a musical idea on the xylophone requires the coordination of cognitive and gross motor processes. This level of challenge seemed to disappoint many scholars; one participant explained the issue after repeatedly asking to play the xylophone for multiple class periods, "it wasn't as much fun as I thought." This could also help to explain the 39% of scholars who considered the cup routine their least favorite activity from the set. Perhaps the use of tools in music-making, whether they are musical instruments or repurposed household objects, provides an initial barrier to expression which frustrates the creative music-making child. With greater time of exposure and deeper exploration of such activities, these cognitive and motor obstacles could certainly be overcome to facilitate expressive behavior using instruments and other tools. Another factor influencing students' preference for certain musical behaviors that cannot be overcome through exposure is portability. One third grade student explained that she preferred

the cup song and hand-clapping activities because she could take her routines home and do it with her little sister, but she could not do that with xylophone parts or large-group movement games. This is reflected in student responses to the question, “Which of these activities, if any, would you share at home?” on the final survey:

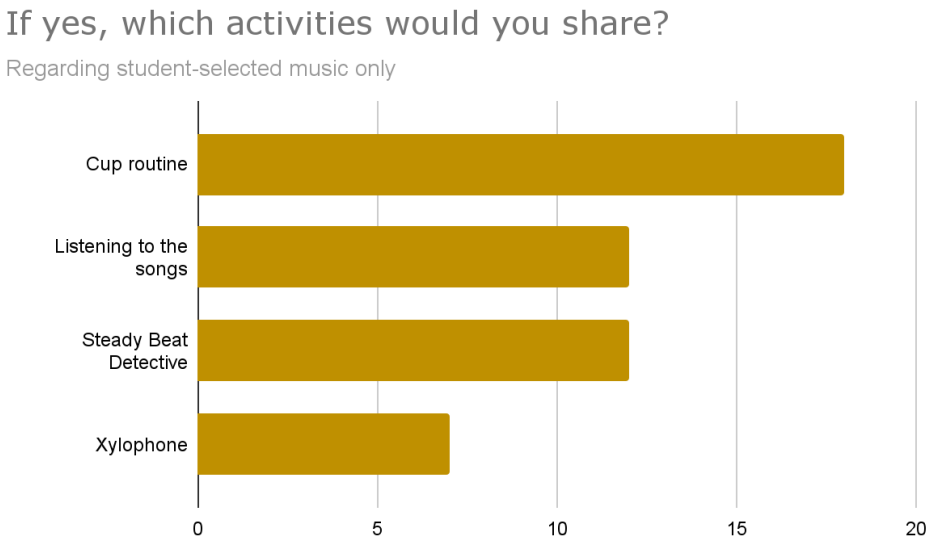

Figure 13: Responses to final survey question #4

Though the cup routine was voted as the most disliked activity by 39% of participants, it was the most common activity that students claimed that they would share with a family member or friend.

While most scholars claimed on their final surveys that they would be willing to share activities from music classes with their families or friends outside of school, a surprising number of participants chose to share class activities even before the question was posed. During the second session of creating and performing a movement routine with cups, one fourth grade class entered into a discussion of how they taught their routines to peers or family members after the prior session. Two participants explained how they taught the activity to their younger sisters,

and three students who had a playdate over the weekend had practiced each others' routines from class. The scholars noted that completing the activity at home was even more fun than in class since they did not have to cope with the distraction of other groups and could change the song if they wanted to at any time. Additionally, incorporating the input of closest friends and loved ones at home helped scholars to complete the activity without navigating the traditional difficulties of cooperative work that arise in the classroom.

Many scholars expressed dislike for group work in their final survey responses, even though they were engaged throughout, smiling, and expressing positive attitudes during the activities themselves. When pressed, students often explained that working with a group was difficult and they preferred to work by themselves. However, students' body language during the group work process and students' self-reported feelings toward the process seemed incompatible in many cases. For example, one student who spent the entire group work process smiling, dancing, and creating unique material toward the song later said that she felt "worried" when working with her group and expressed concern as to "whether she was getting it right." Still, this self-consciousness does not detract from the success of the group's work as a whole. Students were able to generate far more expressive and inventive routines during the group composition portion of the cup routine than they were during the individual exploration phase of the same activity, demonstrating the power of cooperative effort in broadening the creative output of the scholars. Overall results of the group work process, and its relationship to student-selected and teacher-selected musical examples, are discussed further below.

Conclusion

In response to research question 1, “How do children demonstrate cultural ownership of music?,” the fieldwork process provided several broad generalizations. Student ownership behaviors tended to centralize around participation, featuring singing along and dancing to music as primary demonstrations of preference. Selecting music for listening was the third most common ownership behavior self-reported by student participants. Results of this initial survey were verified through exploratory activities involving music liked by scholars, whereby the majority of participants displayed great creativity in movement when listening to music of their preferred styles. Students also sang along with known songs and demonstrated choice in listening when applicable, selecting their favorite musical examples when offered multiple options.

Overall, the students’ initial preference toward a piece of music was a reliable early barometer for their engagement with the piece. Students who enjoyed a piece of music were likely to smile, raise their hand to ask or answer questions, and follow directions the first time given. Students who disliked a piece of music typically required more coaxing to begin work, turning away from the instructor or fidgeting throughout instruction. However, after learning activities were introduced, students’ appreciation for a piece of music ceased to provide a reliable predictor of their progress, especially in movement activities. Students demonstrated nearly equal inventiveness toward student-selected and teacher-selected activities where movement constituted the primary means of creative response. Students showed continued willingness to engage creatively with pieces from any genre, including genres which they professed to dislike, throughout the fieldwork process. Despite any obstacles such as unfamiliarity with a genre or self-consciousness, children are naturally creative and enjoy opportunities to demonstrate this inherent quality, as researcher Salmah Ayob reports:

> Creativity and movement enjoy a congruous relationship, in that children are naturally creative. They are uninhibited. They imagine and pretend. They create and appreciate. It is not 'pretending' which stimulates them to create movement imaginatively but it is a sense of feeling, moving, being and belonging.They are not only original but are ingenious and creative in their thoughts and actions. Obviously, creativity is a characteristic inherent in the lives of practically all children.[94]

This tendency toward creativity as a natural response was demonstrated widely during movement activities, even when scholars were unable to create movements corresponding to the style of an unknown genre. Participants seemed not to care about this discrepancy between style of music and style of response in movement activities but did begin to notice and express concern during instrumental playing. As noted in the Engagement Monitoring Key results and shown in Appendix G: Final Survey Results, students were naturally less engaged in instrumental playing activities regardless of affinity for the chosen genre.

During both individual and group activities involving liked music, scholars showed equal creativity in movement. Group work facilitated the production of highly creative movement routines, but sometimes led scholars to worry about their own performance to a greater extent than they did during independent work. In group activities with self-selected music, scholars were able to solve most peer conflicts without teacher intervention. In group work with teacher-selected music, however, students often required teacher assistance to ameliorate similar peer issues. During individual activities with disliked music, participants' dislike of a given piece typically provided little barrier toward their creative attempts with movement. Students were willing to create and demonstrate movements while listening to songs of various genres, even those that they self-reported to dislike, such as country. Understandably, students did demonstrate greater musicality within style idioms they understood, such as ensuring that their

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[94] Salmah Hj. Ayob, "Creative Movement for Children," *Pendidik Dan Pendidikan* 9 (1987/88): 55, http://eprints.usm.my/33735/1/jilid_09_artikel_06.pdf.

movements were connected to song meaning and style. It is interesting to note the potential pitfalls of stylistic disinterest in varied types of activities. When students were uninterested in the style of a movement activity, they were still able to demonstrate actions that fit the criteria of the activity (i.e.: connecting movement to the steady beat and changing movements at phrase breaks). In instrumental playing, a lack of affinity for the chosen genre directly led to poor task performance. Students who were unengaged quickly stopped showing correct mallet technique and failed to create music with intentionality, instead playing random material unconnected to class objectives.

This behavior coincides with the ownership behaviors self-reported in the scholars' initial surveys, illustrating a preference for creative movement activities and a lack of familiarity with instrumental performance. Throughout the research process, participants also demonstrated ownership of class material by choosing to share activities with their families or friends at home. This occurred regardless of scholars' level of affinity for the song chosen, even occurring when scholars self-reported a dislike for the activity itself. When choosing music for independent listening, children naturally gravitate toward genres they are familiar with, such as those heard at home or in the community. Despite this logical inclination, this study shows that children will demonstrate ownership behaviors toward any music they engage with, even music from genres they claim to dislike. For example, the participants of this study claimed country music as their most disliked genre, but the hand-clapping routine with country music was widely favored among all classes. 62% of participants listed this as their favorite activity involving teacher-selected music, 18 students claimed they would teach it to a friend or family member, and 17 students claimed they would like to listen to the country song "Stuck Like Glue" again at home.

The genre of the musical example itself seemed less important than the channels it offered toward creativity. While a child may inherently display creativity toward music from genres they understand already, a teacher or facilitator may be necessary in jump-starting this creativity toward unknown types of music. Once the activity has begun, however, children will begin to take ownership of the music by creating, sharing it with others, and singing along. In this study's population, however, these tendencies were absent from instrumental activities. This is likely due to the fact that 92% of scholars in the participant pool claimed not to play instruments at home, rendering instrumental performance outside the scope of these children's natural ownership behaviors.

This study seems to suggest that scholars will naturally begin to exhibit ownership behaviors toward any music they are exposed to. For these purposes, "exposure" indicates any activity that allows students to demonstrate musical creativity without significant mental or physical stress that detracts from the experience. For this study's population, exposure could include solo and group movement activities, vocal explorations, and movement with props. Instrumental activities would not serve as useful methods of first exposure to new genres since students do not choose to exhibit these behaviors as natural responses to preferred music. Of course, further study is needed to verify these claims, and the ownership behaviors favored by a population must always be considered in reengineering these types of activities toward a different people group.

Chapter Five: Conclusion/Discussion

Summary of Study

The study's first research question, "How do children demonstrate ownership of their musical idiolects?," was satisfied by the initial survey and questioning of the participant population. Overall, the most prevalent ownership behaviors displayed by students were creative in nature, centralizing behaviors that did not require any specialized equipment or instruments. The second research question, "Is there a difference in the way children interact with music of their own choosing as compared to music of a teacher's choosing?,**"** was informed by the series of ten music classes containing creative activities in both domains. Activities involving movement and instrumental performance were the primary means of determining student creativity in relation to various types of music.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

When engaged in movement activities, students were far more likely to tailor their responses to the individual song's meaning when listening to music from their own idiolects. For example, students quickly began to select "grumpy" movements and physically displayed a negative attitude when interacting with the song, "Despicable Me." However, when interacting with unfamiliar or disliked music types, students often failed to adjust their movements to fit the tempo, style, or subject of a song. When listening to "Permission to Dance" directly after "Despicable Me," students who disliked K-pop continued to demonstrate moves that fit with the first song and failed to adjust their responses toward the new musical example. Student responses displayed much greater engagement and creativity when they were associated with students' natural means of expression, such as movement. Final performances were less inventive when

associated with the population's less common methods of self-expression, such as instrumental performance.

Altogether, the activities present in this study were designed to align with the central standards of music education as provided by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. The National Core Arts Standards for music education evaluate artistic literacy through four primary competencies: creating, performing, responding, and connecting.[95] These four disciplines are designed to "embody the key concepts, processes, and traditions of study"[96] in music, providing a well-rounded series of methods for engaging with the arts. Therefore, it is through these diverse response pathways that the research subjects demonstrated their ownership of the various music examples in the fieldwork process. Students created movements of their own that connected with the expressive qualities of music, then performed their compositions and improvisations through body movement and instrumental playing. Participants responded to musical examples through cooperative sharing activities with partners and small groups as well as through the refinement of existing performances to create a more successful final product. This variety of activities was designed to reduce the bias implicit in small-scale studies and offer the most diverse possible range of expressive modes for the project. Further information regarding research limitations and recommendations for future study are included below.

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[95] National Core Arts Standards, "Music at a Glance," 2021, https://nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Music%20at%20a%20Glance.pdf.

[96] National Core Arts Standards, "National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning," accessed March 17, 2024, https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/Conceptual%20Framework%2007-21-16.pdf.

Limitations

This study is ethnographic, and not lab-controlled, in nature. The most blatant limitation of this study of children's music culture is the inclusion of exclusively female children. Age is also a constraining factor, with the focus of the study highlighting children aged eight to ten. The timing of the school year and school day likewise limit the reach of this study, as students are present only at certain times and on specific days to exhibit musical behaviors. The school-based setting of this research narrows the field of available musics for listening activities in class, as materials must avoid vulgar language and subject matter to be considered appropriate for school. In addition, although the music used in class was designed to reflect the typical choices of the research population, those with outlying musical tastes were not represented to the same extent as those with more typical likes and dislikes.

It bears repeating that this is not a lab-controlled study. Many factors other than the level of ownership may contribute to natural variance in responses from the participants. Among these variables may be the day of the week of the music class, whether the class had taken an exam before attending music, or response to misbehavior in the classroom. Students involved in the English Language Learning (ELL) program at the school may have felt unable to thoroughly express their thoughts through writing on the initial and final surveys, though their responses to the music-making and creative activities throughout the study should have been unaffected by their status as emergent multilinguals.

It is also important to consider the presence of the researcher as an authority figure observing these ownership behaviors in a classroom setting rather than as a peer observing ownership behaviors at home. The adoption of creative and playful activities, designed to diminish the barriers of institutional rigidity and enable free expression, certainly assists in

developing a clear understanding of students' musical expressions and cultures. Still, the influence of the structured setting will remain a confounding variable in any research conducted in the classroom, begging a future examination of the question: can an adult facilitator encourage children to demonstrate the level and type of ownership seen through play while working in a structured, classroom environment?

Recommendations for Future Study

In addition to exploring the prevalence of play in the music room, another primary pathway to expanding the conclusions of this research is to widen its geographic scope. As with any ethnography, this study represents a microcosmic view of a highly specific people group, not a blanket statement that applies to all. To generate wider conclusions, one needs wider results, gained through the observations of people from wider areas. This study also focused on a binary distinction between self-selected and non-self-selected music. There is no mention of the myriad other sources for music in students' lives, such as peer-selected or family-selected music. Future researchers may be motivated to investigate these alternative selection methods, glimpsing a wider variety of student ownership behaviors.

In addition, some types of music were excluded from this study because of the limitations of a school setting. A prevalent component of children's music culture, as stated by Peter and Iona Opie, is the adoption of taboo topics that may encourage children to show independence or challenge authority.[97] Over a third of the students surveyed for this study listed hip-hop as a favorite genre, with Ice Spice, Nicki Minaj, and Cardi B all featuring among the most liked artists. These artists, and hip-hop artists in general, are recognized for their discussion of mature

[97] Opie and Opie, The Singing Game, 391.

themes ranging from political causes to sex. Several favorite songs listed by students, from "Boy's a Liar Pt. 2" to "WAP," were unplayable in the classroom because of inappropriate subject matter or potentially offensive language. In fact, most hip-hop songs requested by scholars were not permitted in the classroom. Some requested songs were adaptable for the classroom if I selected a radio edit of the song or created a school-appropriate edit myself, as I did for Dua Lipa's "Dance the Night."[98] It may be possible for future researchers to incorporate songs more authentically outside of a school setting, where there are fewer content boundaries.

It may also be a fascinating project to investigate the difference between unfamiliarity, apathy, and antipathy. In my own research, I noticed a trend from several students who would encounter music from outside of their music cultures and still attempt to engage with this music using their familiar idioms. For instance, one student responded to the jazz standard, "Take Five," with hip hop dance movements. The student explained, "I don't know this song, but it's good." When I expressed interest in her style, she explained, "I don't know how to dance to it, so I used some moves from TikTok." Responding to the same piece of music, another child chose to exclusively copy movements that I had demonstrated earlier in class. In the moment, I thought that she was simply not interested in the song, or that she disliked it. However, when I spoke to her later, she explained to me that she thought the song had a "good beat" and she would like to hear it again, but that she was copying my movements since she "didn't know how" to dance to it using her own choices. Noticing the differences between unfamiliarity and disinterest are also crucial in determining sound instructional practices, discussed further below.

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[98] Dua Lipa, "Dance the Night," edited by Sarah Dworjan, October 16, 2023, YouTube video, 2:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5TKts6CKbg&feature=youtu.be.

Recommendations for Music Teachers

One of the most intriguing aspects of this project was the increased engagement and creativity shown by the scholars during activities involving their preferred types of music. It is important to ask questions about the types of music students prefer without relying on assumptions. Regardless of geographic proximity, students may be exposed to wildly disparate musics at home. While some preferred music types may meet the teacher's expectations, there is no substitute for asking questions and knowing your students well.

It is also beneficial to expose students to music which they may not expect to like. During this study, it was surprising to notice multiple instances of unexpected positive responses shown toward songs which aligned with the most disliked genres and categories listed by the participants. As mentioned in the heading above, several students admitted to enjoying "Take Five," despite listing jazz on their initial surveys as a disliked genre and despite the status of jazz as the second most disliked genre overall. In addition, the song "Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)" was initially selected for an activity requiring teacher selected music; however, when the song played in class, most of the fourth graders in the room at the time began singing along immediately. In addition to broadening the scholars' musical tastes, selecting music outside their traditional lexicon may also assist in broadening the instructor's understanding of the students' likes and dislikes to foster a deeper artistic relationship with the scholars.

Even while broadening the genres heard in the music room (i.e.: the artistic input), it is likewise imperative to allow for a wide array of activities (artistic output) during class time. Because over 70% of students listed dancing or moving as their natural responses to the music they enjoy, several types of movement activities were incorporated into this study. However, not all students will align with the most popular methods of expression, and lessons focused on

playing instruments and singing will help the teacher engage all scholars through a variety of response channels. The core tenets of the music teacher should incorporate both curiosity and flexibility. Through curiosity, the instructor prioritizes learning about the students and learning new methods of expression from them. Being flexible assists the teacher in altering lesson plans that do not engage a particular student population to best serve each class as needed.

When activities with unfamiliar music or disliked music are necessary, it may be helpful to begin with group work, especially collaborative work where they are permitted to self-select their pairs or small groups. In this study, scholars demonstrated more engagement with the material and developed more creative solutions to open-ended tasks when they worked within groups. However, the teacher should also note that scholars require more adult support to overcome peer conflicts during activities with unfamiliar or disliked music (see pg. 45).

Summary

Elementary-aged children exist in a stage of inborn curiosity and creativity that is reflected in their natural ownership behaviors toward their preferred types of music. The most common ownership behaviors are those centered in the body such as dancing and singing. More advanced iterations of these activities such as body percussion and composing new parts to known songs are less common but still prevalent. In this study, playing music on instruments at home was very uncommon, likely due to a combination of socioeconomic factors as well as the relative difficulty of playing when compared to singing or dancing. Children also value artistic choice in requesting which songs to play and which to avoid.

By the time students reach upper elementary school, they tend to have a clear understanding of their musical likes and dislikes and are able to express this in terms of genres,

artists, and moods. However, the self-reported musical preferences of the study participants were often far less stringent than expected. Throughout the fieldwork process, there were several instances where children's self-reported musical preferences were more restrictive than the realities of their ownership behaviors. Children who claimed to hate country music were just as likely to sing along to it as children with no opinion about the genre. Students who self-reported a dislike for "old music" were the first to begin dancing along and creating movements when requested. The extent to which students exhibit ownership behaviors seems less related to musical "input" and more closely tied to musical "output," meaning that the song chosen matters less to students than the choice of response that they are expected to give. This was especially true in movement activities, where scholars were frequently satisfied to create incongruous movement responses to unknown genres without displaying a lack of engagement. Students gravitate toward activities that allow them to play with their bodies and voices, accepting tools when they help to unlock new possibilities in these output modes. As noted by pedagogue Carl Orff, children learn best when their learning activities are aligned with the principles of free play; he claims, "Since the beginning of time, children have not liked to study. They would much rather play, and if you have their interests at heart, you will let them learn while they play; they will find that what they have mastered is child's play."[99]

The selection of genre is most influential when students are completing activities outside the boundaries of "child's play," such as those that are highly structured or those which are not aligned to that population's natural play behaviors. In this participant pool, activities involving instruments sustained the highest rates of disengagement and the lowest resulting creativity. This may be partially due to the unavailability of instruments in the participant community but may

[99] Carl Orff, qtd. in Arts Calibre Academy, "Arts Quotations," accessed March 15, 2024, https://www.artscalibre.ca/arts-quotations.

also reflect the simple developmental truth that movement and vocalization are more accessible and elemental than the use of musical instruments and tools. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the cultural lives of children have been historically overlooked or subsumed into the study of their associated adults. The presence of the philosophical "triviality barrier" may still delay progress into the research of children as culture bearers and creators, but modern explorations into children's culture have begun to remediate gaps in this research. Nevertheless, the dynamic shape of modern life continues to provide endless material for the enterprising musicologist, especially when considering the changing roles of musical play in children's contemporary lives. How will the ubiquity of technology continue to alter the musical expressions of children? What changing ownership behaviors will be seen in future musical explorations, and how will the purpose of music in children's lives continue to evolve? The ethnomusicological study of children is by no means complete, and the questions evaluated in this study are by no means satisfied. There is much work, and much play, still left to do.

Appendix A: Initial Survey

1. What kinds of music do you like?

_____

_____

2. What are some songs you like the most?

_____

_____

3. When you're at home and you hear a song that you like, what do you do?

_____

_____

4. Do you do these things with music you like at home? Check off the options that you like to do.

- Listen to music
- Dance
- Sing
- Play instruments
- Body percussion (clapping, snapping fingers, drumming on your legs)
- Make up new songs

5. Do you ever tell your friends or your family to listen to music you like?

- I do this a lot
- I do this sometimes
- I did this one time
- I never do this

6. Who do you ask to listen to the types of music that you like? If you said “I never do this,” please leave these lines blank.

_____

_____

7. What are some kinds of music that you don’t like?

_____

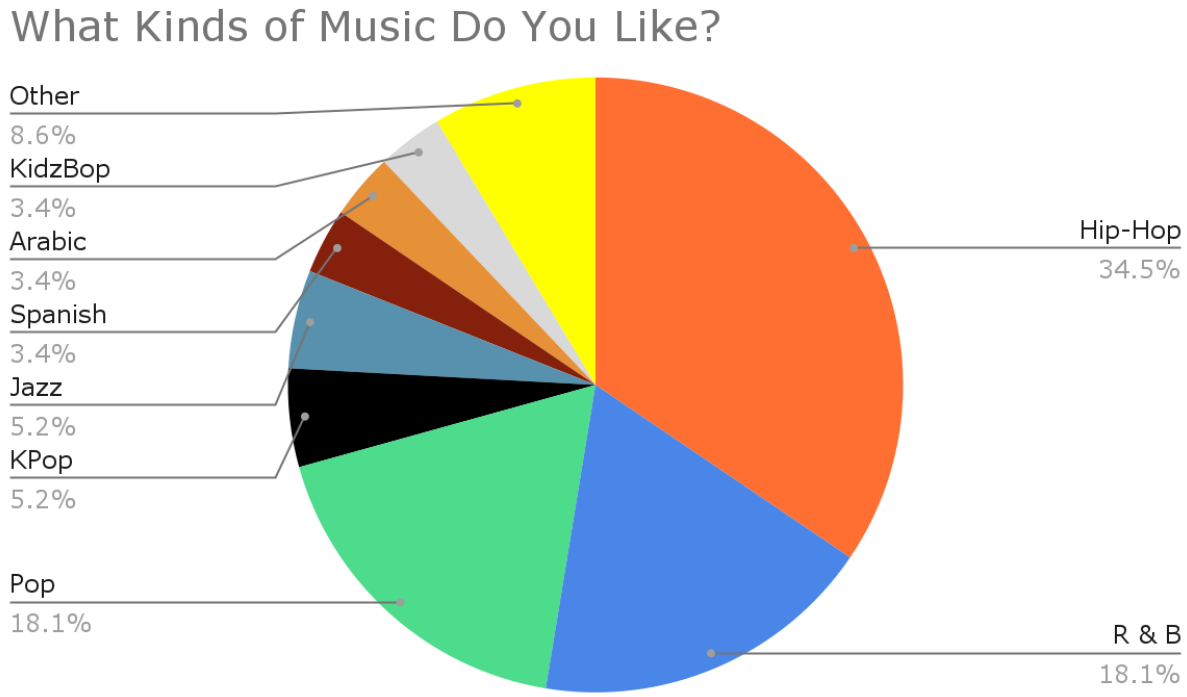
_____

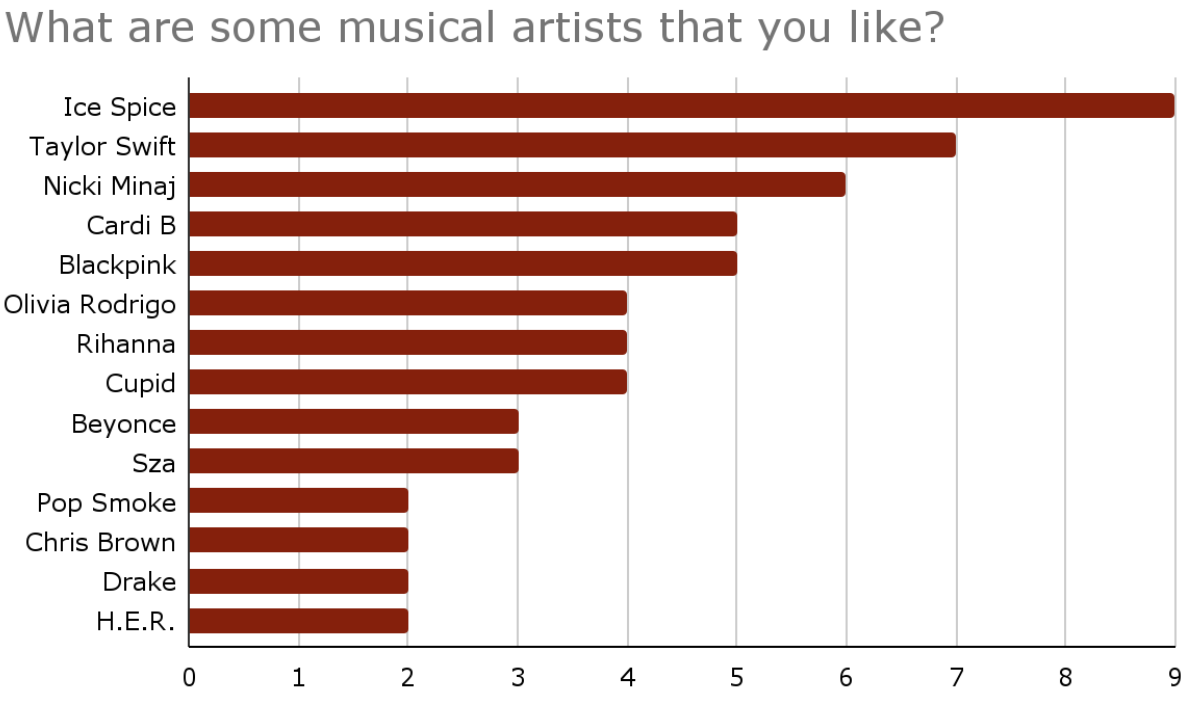
8. When you hear a song that you don’t like, what do you do?

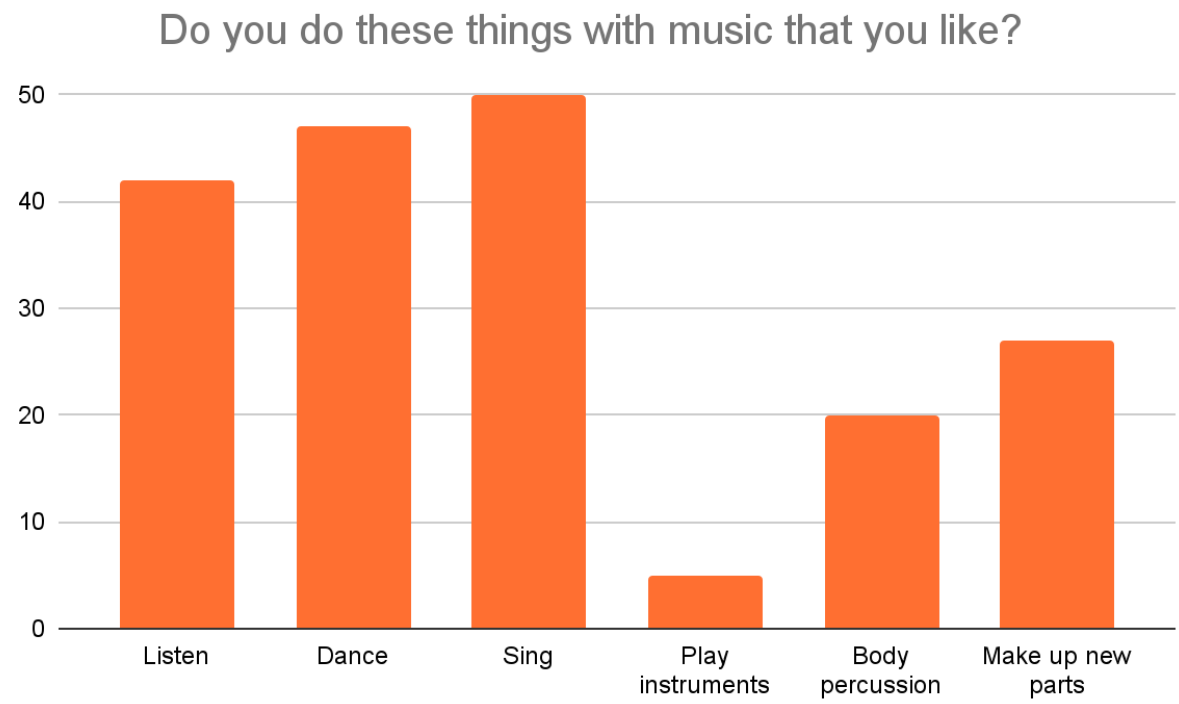
_____

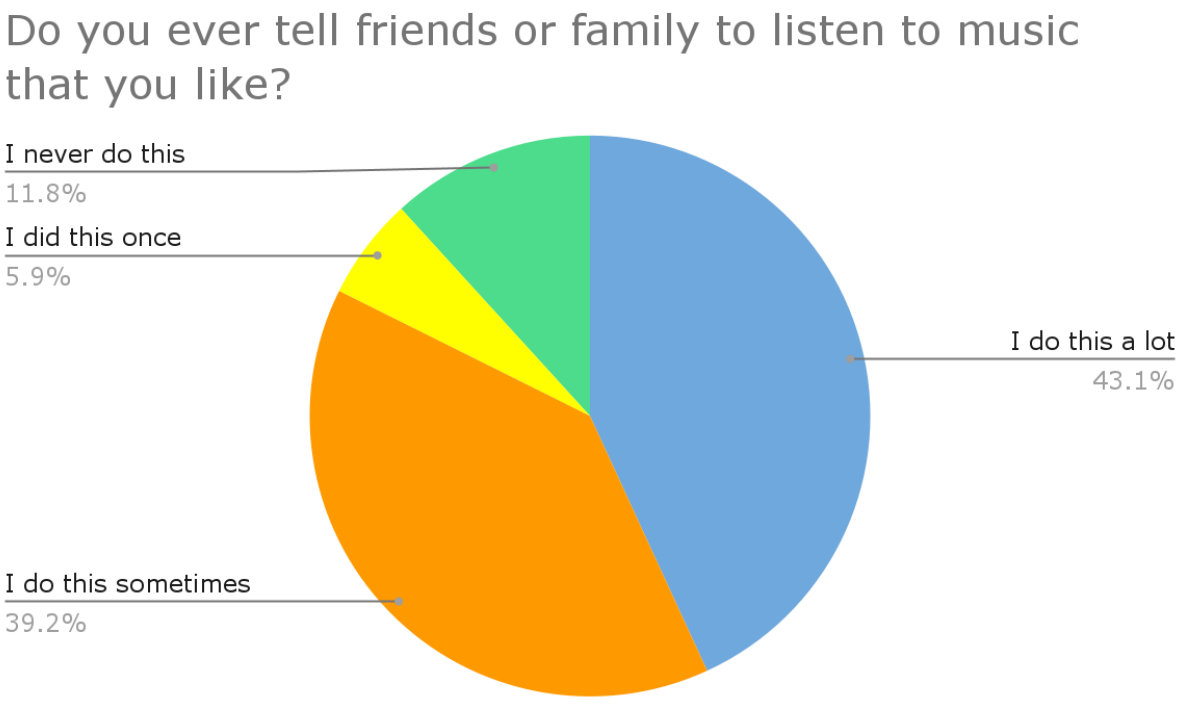
_____

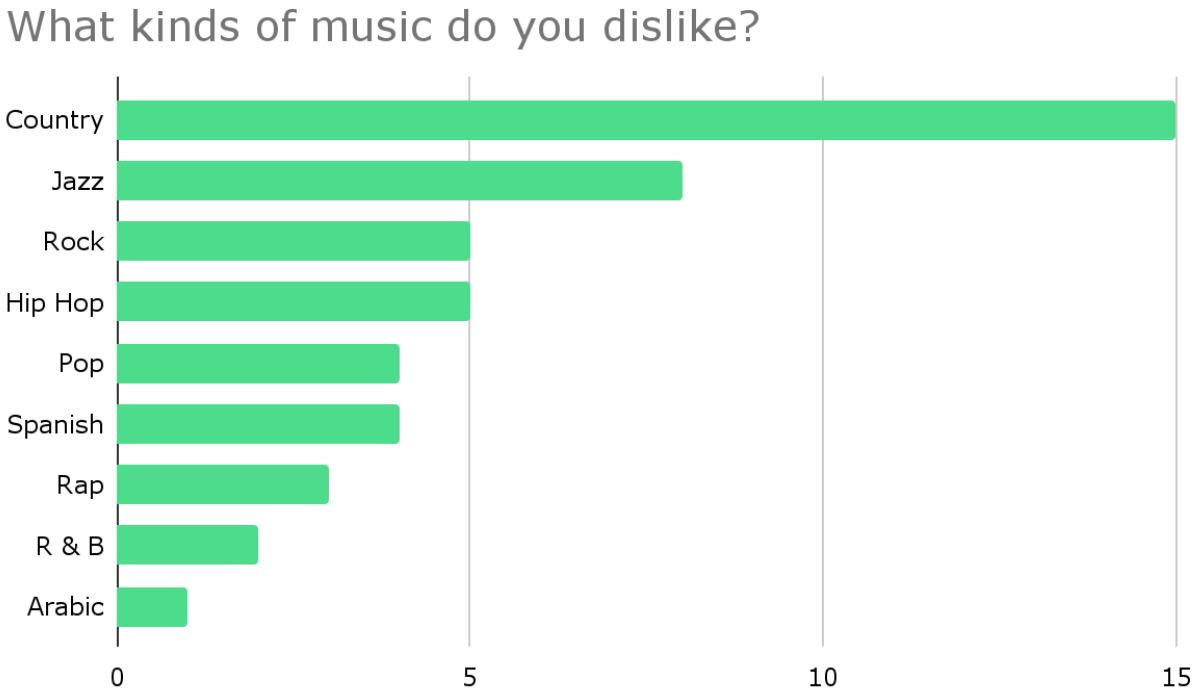
Appendix B: Initial Survey Responses

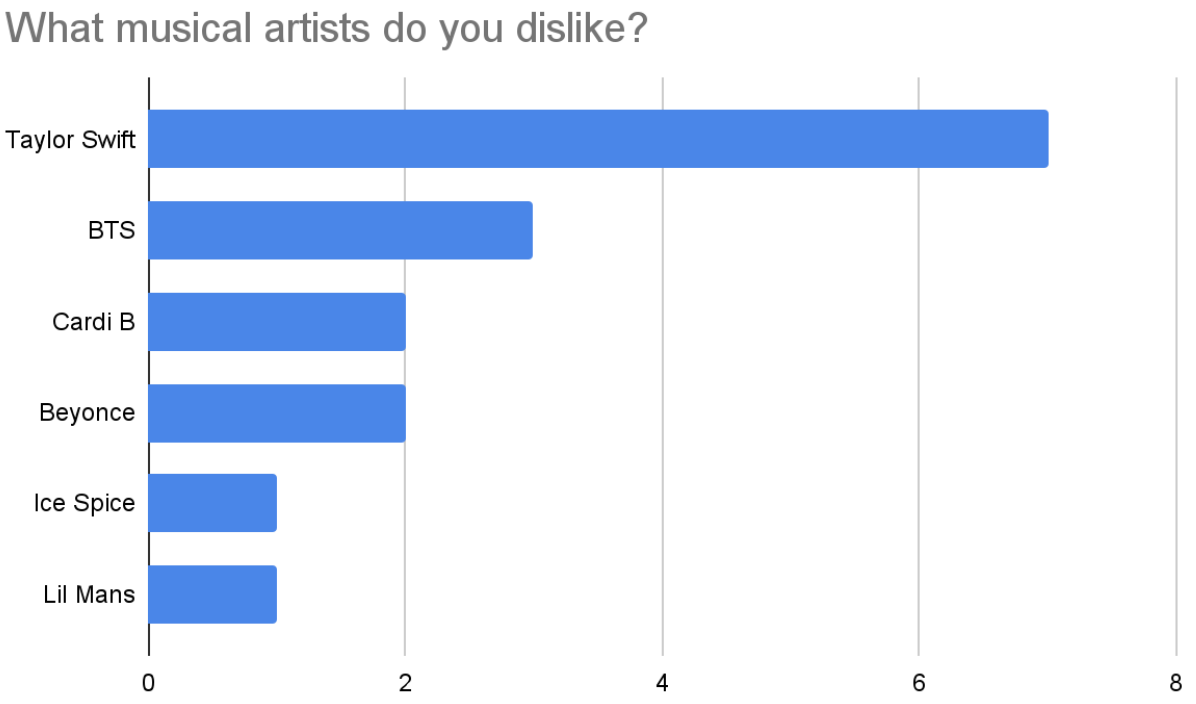


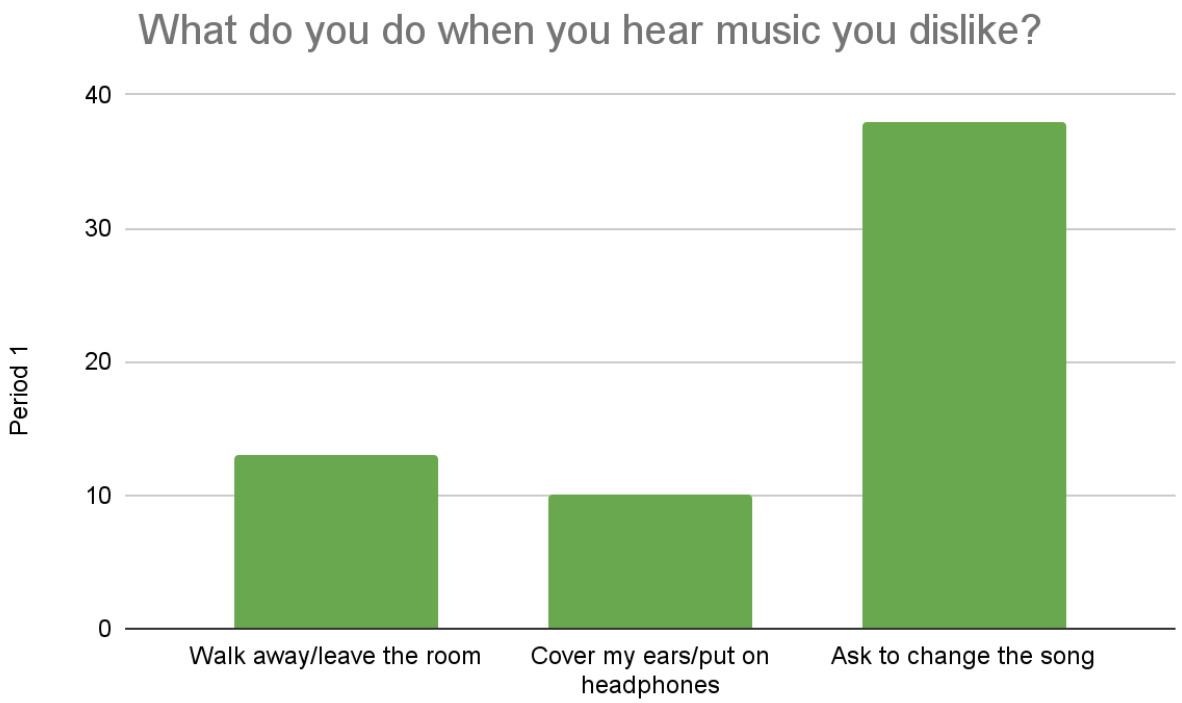


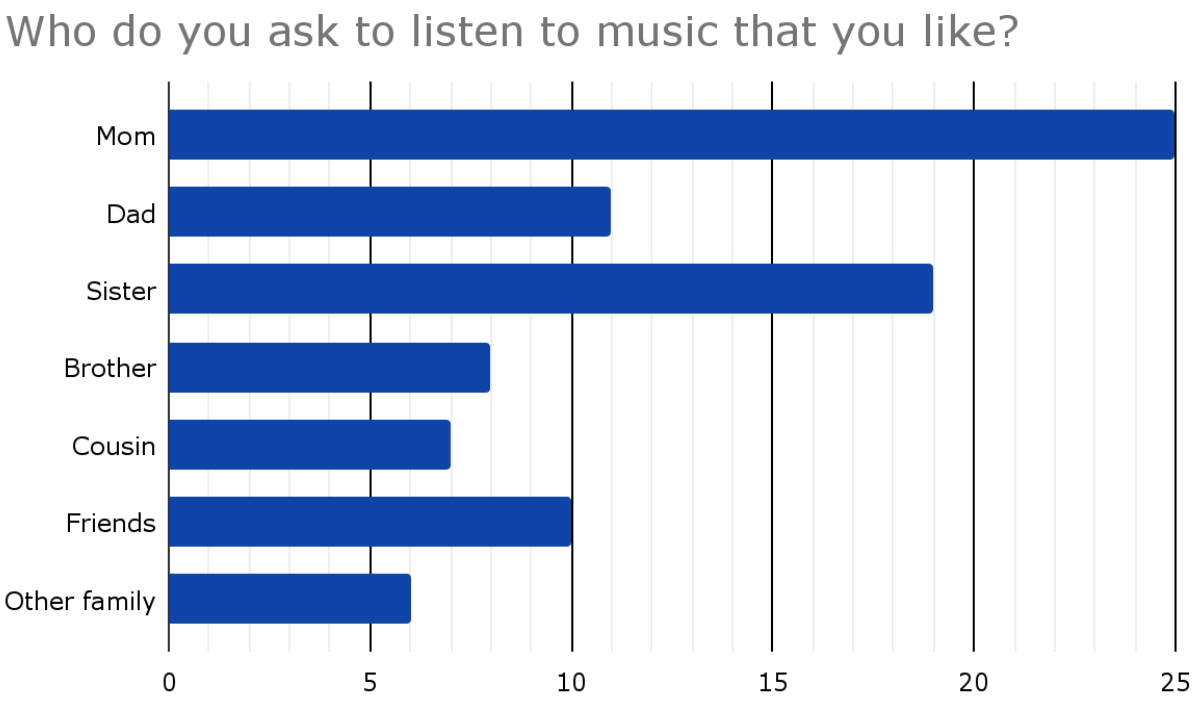

Do you do these things with music that you like?
50
40
30
20
10
0
Listen
Dance
Sing
Play instruments
Body percussion
Make up new parts


Do you ever tell friends or family to listen to music that you like?
I never do this
11.8%
I did this once
5.9%
I do this a lot
43.1%
I do this sometimes
39.2%


What kinds of music do you dislike?
Country
Jazz
Rock
Hip Hop
Pop
Spanish
Rap
R & B
Arabic
0
5
10
15


What musical artists do you dislike?
Taylor Swift
BTS
Cardi B
Beyonce
Ice Spice
Lil Mans
0
2
4
6
8


What do you do when you hear music you dislike?
40
30
20
10
0
Period 1
Walk away/leave the room
Cover my ears/put on headphones
Ask to change the song


Who do you ask to listen to music that you like?
Mom
Dad
Sister
Brother
Cousin
Friends
Other family
0
5
10
15
20
25

Appendix C: Session Outlines

Student participants were involved in a series of ten 45-minute music-making sessions for this project. All sessions took place with the whole class, ranging from 19 to 25 students per class.

Session 1: introduction

- Students with completed parental consent forms also complete the assent form
- Students complete the Initial Survey
    - Teacher asks follow-up questions as needed to clarify or expand students' responses

Session 2: exploratory, individual movement

- Students are introduced to the rules of Steady Beat Detective
    - Students generate a "safe set" of movements based on teacher example and brainstorming
- Students play Steady Beat Detective, allowing participants to volunteer for a chance to lead the class in movement along with songs
- Students are permitted to imitate movements generated by the teacher or to create their own movements

Sessions 3 and 4: exploratory movement with props

- Students watch a video of Anna Kendrick performing a movement routine using cups with the song, "When I'm Gone"
- Students imitate the routine shown by the singer using cups of their own
- Students self-select groups or work individually to explore the various movements that are possible when using cups
- Students combine their movements and movements from the original pattern to create a new 8-beat pattern
    - Teacher introduces iconic notation; students assist in notating the original pattern using the template
    - Students receive a blank template to notate their compositions

Session 5 and 6: xylophone exploration

- Xylophones are set up using the pitch set: C FG A#
- Students imitate patterns created by the teacher such as:
    - C G G G
    - F G G G
    - F G F G
    - F G C -
    - F - C -

- Play the song “Dance the Night” by Dua Lipa
- Students perform their choice of melodic pattern as a loop while listening to the song
- Students improvise their own melodic patterns while listening to the song
- Teacher distributes 2-sided whiteboards with the following layout:
- Students begin by filling in the 8 beats from the front side, either with a pattern of the teacher’s choosing or a pattern which they create
    - Students are permitted to play their patterns and refine them as desired while composing
- Students then have the choice to flip to the back of the board and create a 16-beat composition
    - There are no set parameters for composition and students are permitted to write any combination of pitches in any rhythm
    - Students are cautioned to avoid large leaps and extremely fast rhythms which may make their composition less playable

Sessions 7 and 8: hand game and exploration

- Students imitate the movements to a hand game individually
- Student self-select partners (or groups of three in some classes) to try the movements together
    - Students complete the movements along with the song “Johnny B. Goode”
- Student pairs combine to create groups of four (or five, in some cases) to attempt the pattern together
    - Students are encouraged to alter the pattern as needed if they have an odd number or if they feel the position of their hands is uncomfortable
    - Students complete the movements along with the song “Johnny B. Goode”
    - Students may write notes on paper to assist them in remembering their pattern, but are not required to do so
- During Session 8, students return to their groups and review the pattern they used last time
    - Students complete the movements along with the song “Johnny B. Goode”

Session 9: vocal exploration and body percussion

- Listen to the song “Stuck Like Glue” By Sugarland
- Students isolate an ostinato and use their voices to create a sound pattern for this
    - Students may use syllables and sounds generated by the teacher or may create their own
- Scholars translate their vocal ostinati into body percussion patterns
- Scholars combine into groups of 3-5 and create a short body percussion pattern which they can perform along with the song

Session 10: Final survey

- Each class reviews the activities completed over the past nine sessions and creates a list in the classroom which is visible for the entirety of the session
- Students complete the Final Survey
    - Teacher prompts students to clarify or expand answers as needed

Appendix D: Engagement Monitoring Key

Class Name: _____ Class Date: _____

Lesson Topic: _____

Lesson Activity: _____

Engaged Behavior:	Student Initials:
Alert and tracking with eyes	
Emotional reaction (smiling, laughing)	
Asking topical questions	
Raising hands to volunteer for an activity or to answer questions	
Creating new material during movement and composition tasks instead of imitating the teacher's example	

Disengaged Behavior:	Student Initials:
Eyes averted	
Lack of emotional reaction (bored expression, frequent yawning)	
Fewer than three students raise hands to answer a question or to volunteer for an activity	
Imitating the teacher's example during movement and composition tasks instead of creating new material	

Other Notes:

Appendix E: Songs Used in Creative Activities

Key:
(S) indicates a song which students selected or a song which the majority of students professed to like
(T) indicates a song selected by the teacher or a song which the majority of students professed to dislike

Songs used in Steady Beat Detective:

"Traveling Song" by Will.I.Am. (S)
"Permission to Dance" by BTS (T)
"Despicable Me" by Pharell Williams (S)
"Try Everything" by Shakira (S)
"Happy" by Pharell Williams (S)
"Dance the Night" by Dua Lipa (S)
"Cream on Chrome" by Ratatat (S)
"MacAnanty's Reel" by John F. Larchet (T)
"Crazy Little Thing Called Love" by Queen (T)
"Take Five" by the Dave Brubeck Quartet (T)
"Jessica" by the Allman Brothers (T)
"Root Beer Rag" by Billy Joel (T)
"Ngoma Yarira" by Thomas Mapfumo (T)
"You Belong with Me" by Taylor Swift (T)
"Life is a Highway" by Rascall Flats (T)

Songs used to create movement routines with cups:

"When I'm Gone" by Anna Kendrick (S)
"Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)" by Wham! (S)

Songs used for xylophone improvisation and composition:

"Dance the Night" by Dua Lipa (S)
"Walk of Life" by the Dire Straits (T)

Song used in hand game exploration and composition:

"Johnny B. Goode" by Chuck Berry (T)
"Stuck Like Glue" by Sugarland (T)

Appendix F: Final Survey

Please answer numbers 1-4 based on the choices on the board now.

1. Favorite activity: _____

Why was this your favorite? _____

_____

_____

2. Least favorite activity: _____

Why was this your least favorite? _____

_____

_____

3. Would you listen to any of these songs again at home?

- Yes
- No

If you checked Yes, which songs would you listen to again at home?

_____

_____

- No

4. Would you share any of these songs or activities with a friend or family member?

- Yes
- No

If you checked Yes, which songs or activities would you share?

_____

_____

Please answer numbers 5-8 based on the choices on the board now.

5. Favorite activity: _____

Why was this your favorite? _____

_____

_____

6. Least favorite activity: _____

Why was this your least favorite? _____

_____

_____

7. Would you listen to any of these songs again at home?

- Yes
- No

If you checked Yes, which songs would you listen to again at home?

_____

_____

- No

8. Would you share any of these songs or activities with a friend or family member?

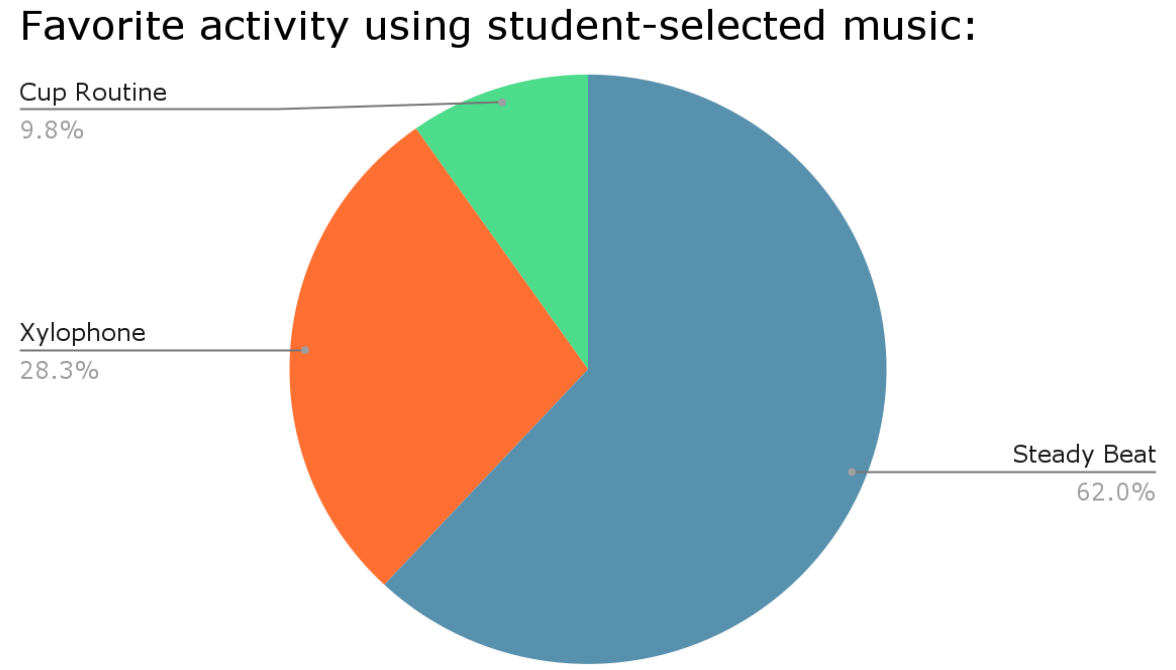
- Yes
- No

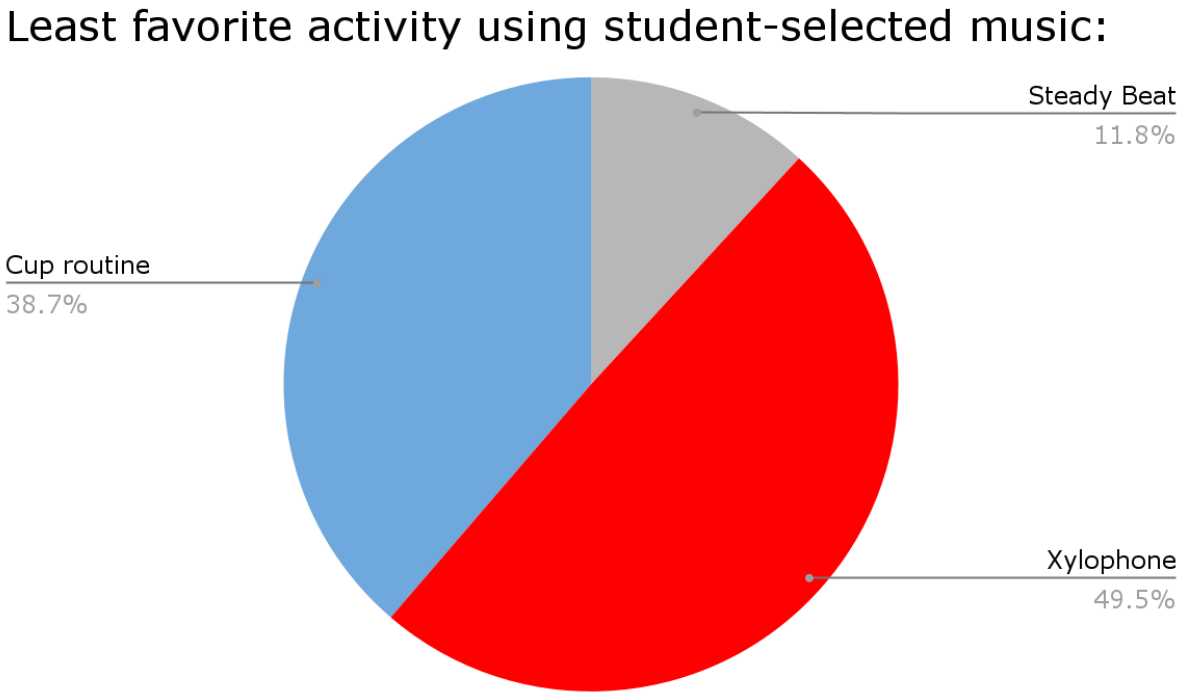
If you checked Yes, which songs or activities would you share?

_____

_____

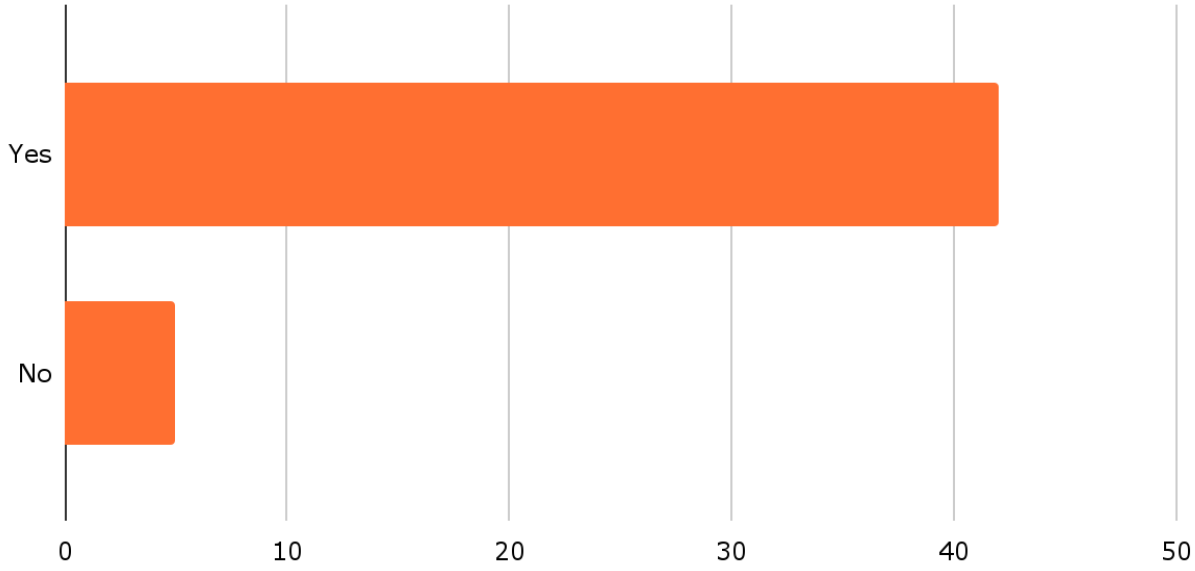
Appendix G: Final Survey Responses





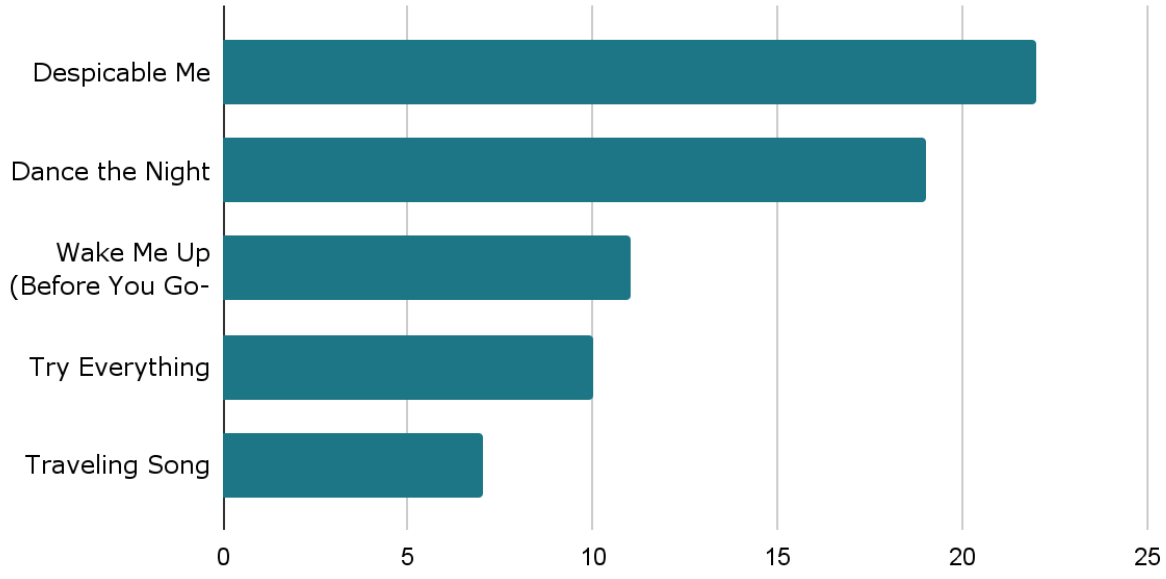
Would you listen to any of these songs again at home?

Regarding student-selected music only



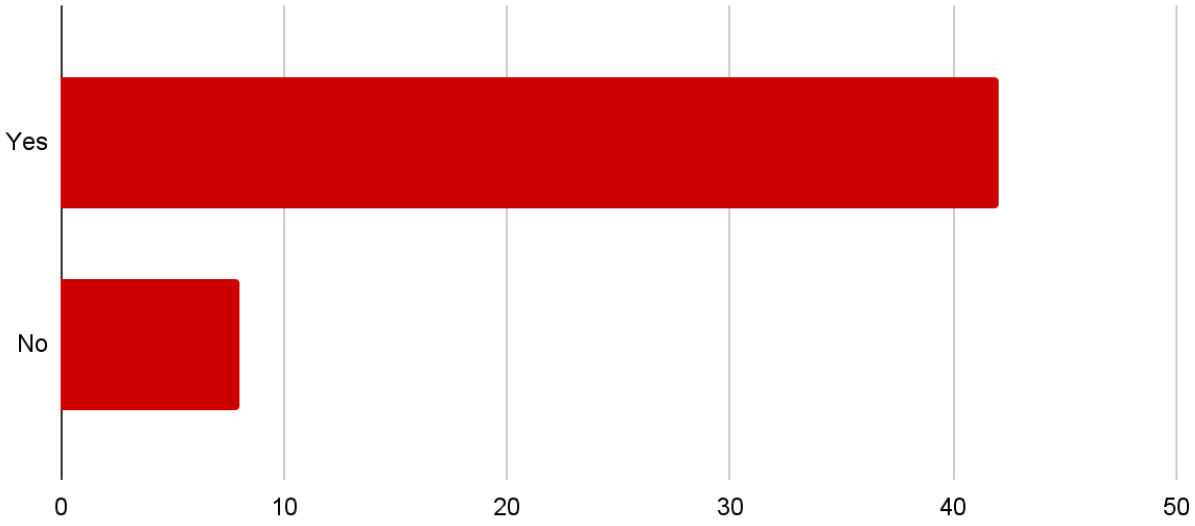
If yes, which songs would you listen to again at home?

Regarding student-selected music only



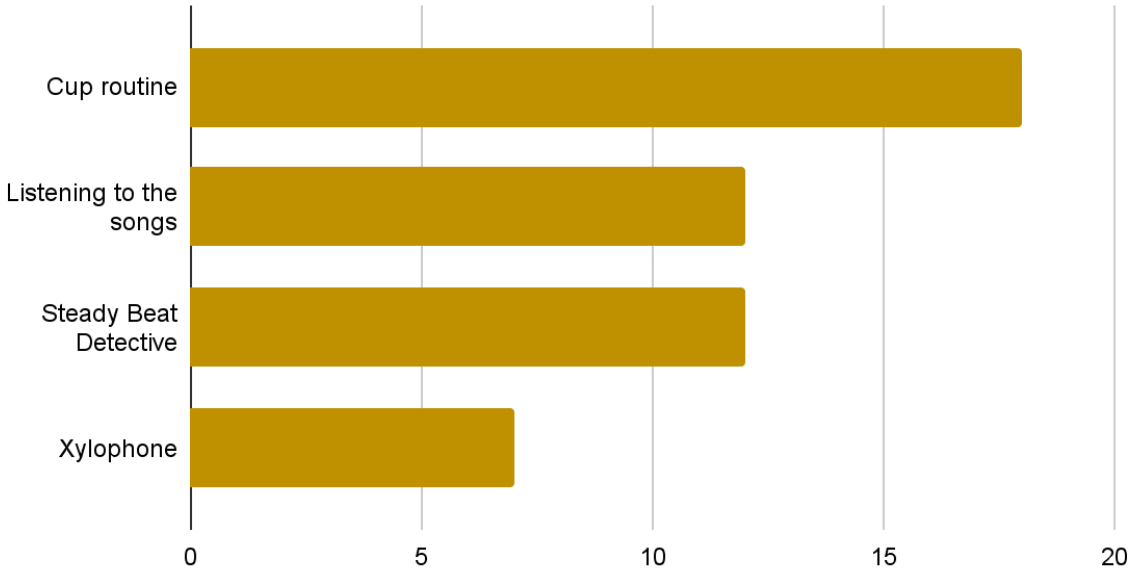
Would you teach any of the things we did to a friend or family member?

Regarding student-selected music only

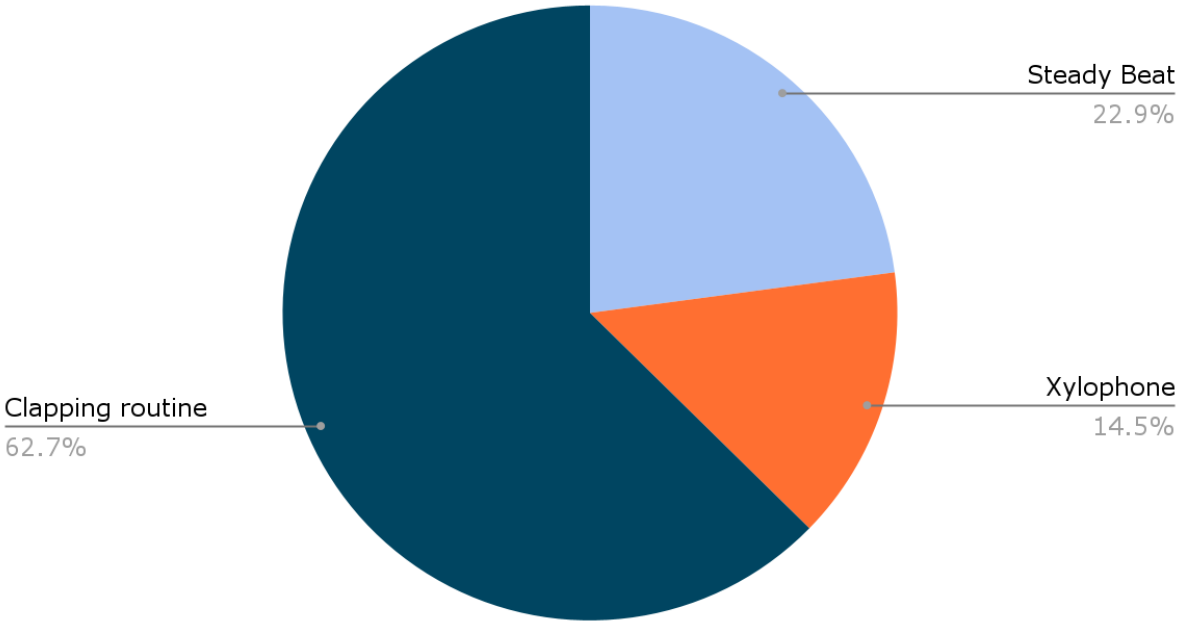


If yes, which activities would you share?

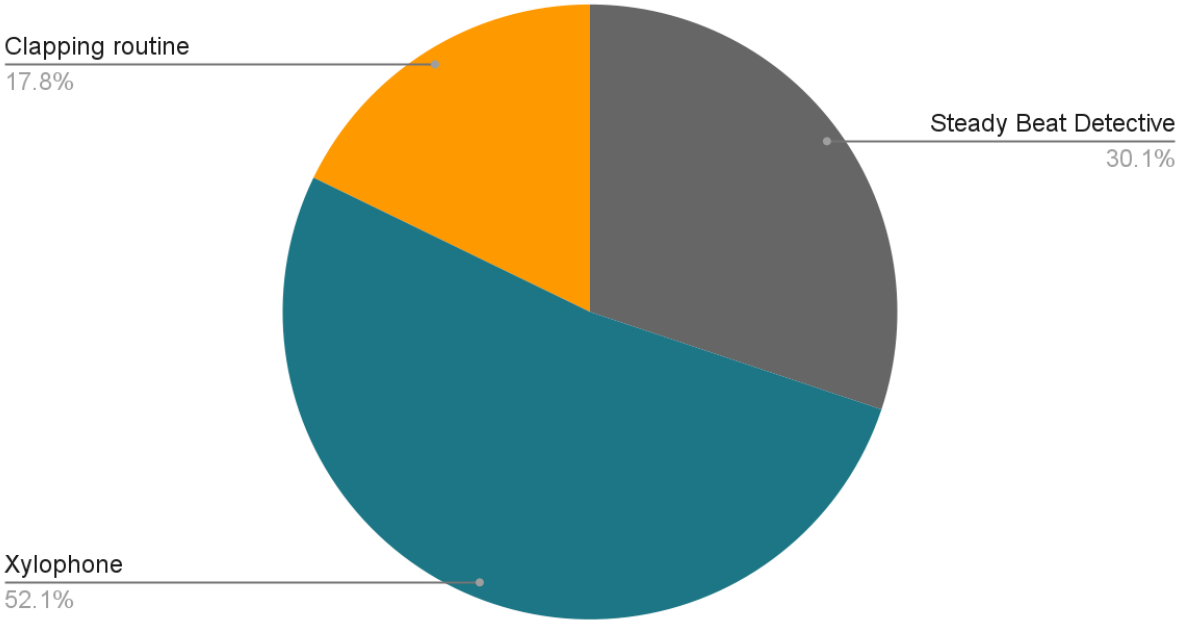
Regarding student-selected music only

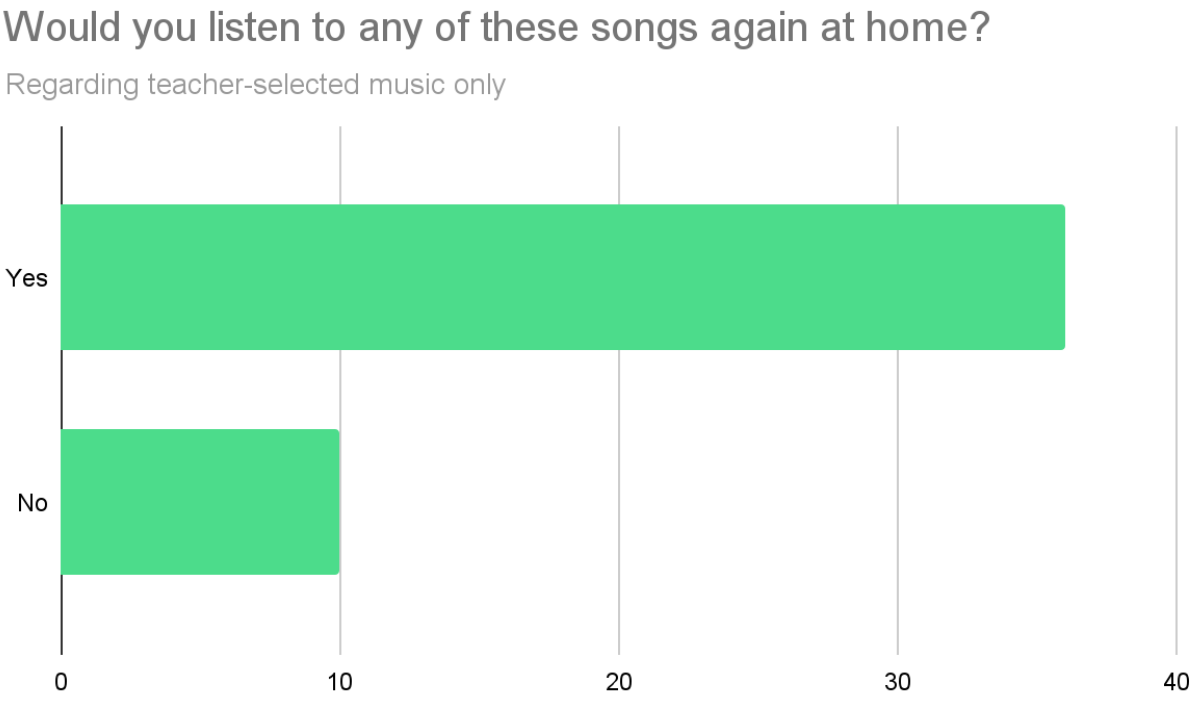


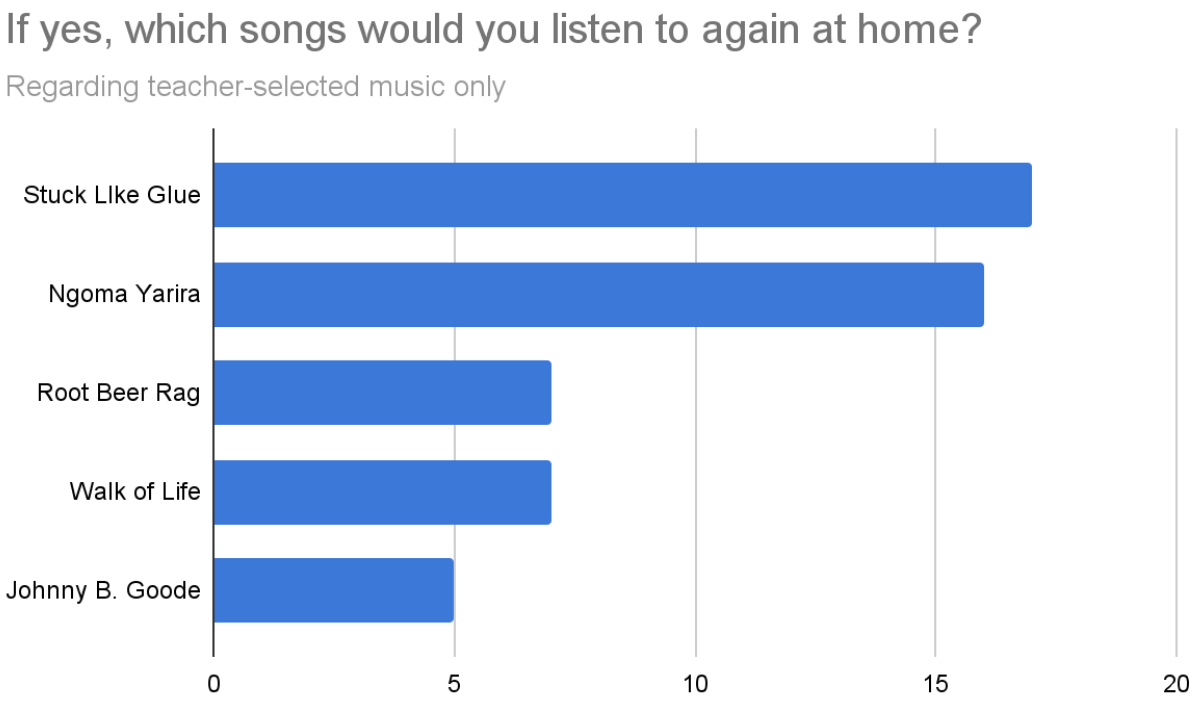
Favorite activity using teacher-selected music:



Least favorite activity using teacher-selected music:

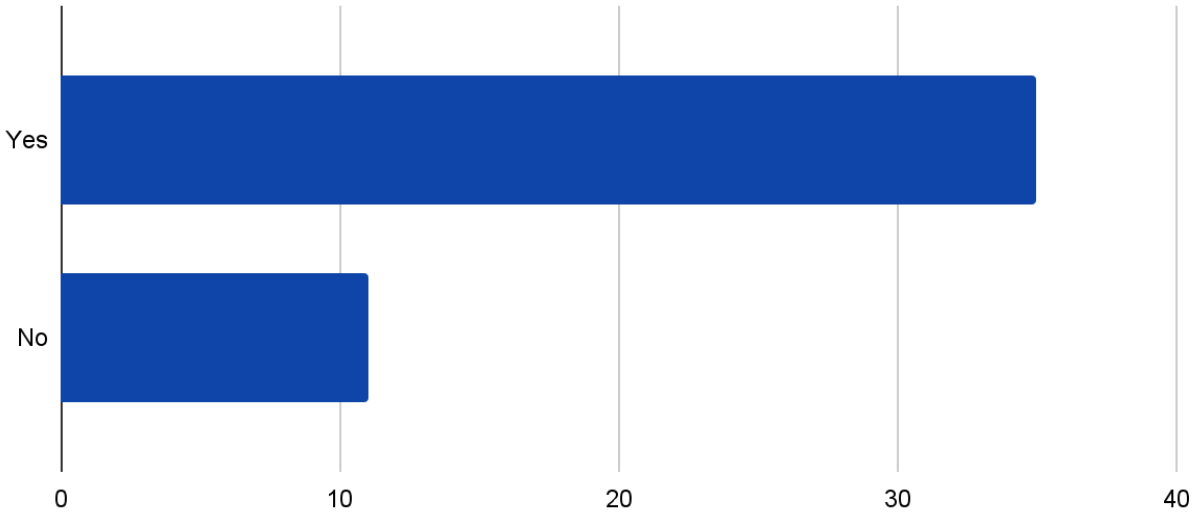



Would you listen to any of these songs again at home?
Regarding teacher-selected music only
Yes
No
0
10
20
30
40


If yes, which songs would you listen to again at home?
Regarding teacher-selected music only
Stuck LIke Glue
Ngoma Yarira
Root Beer Rag
Walk of Life
Johnny B. Goode
0
5
10
15
20

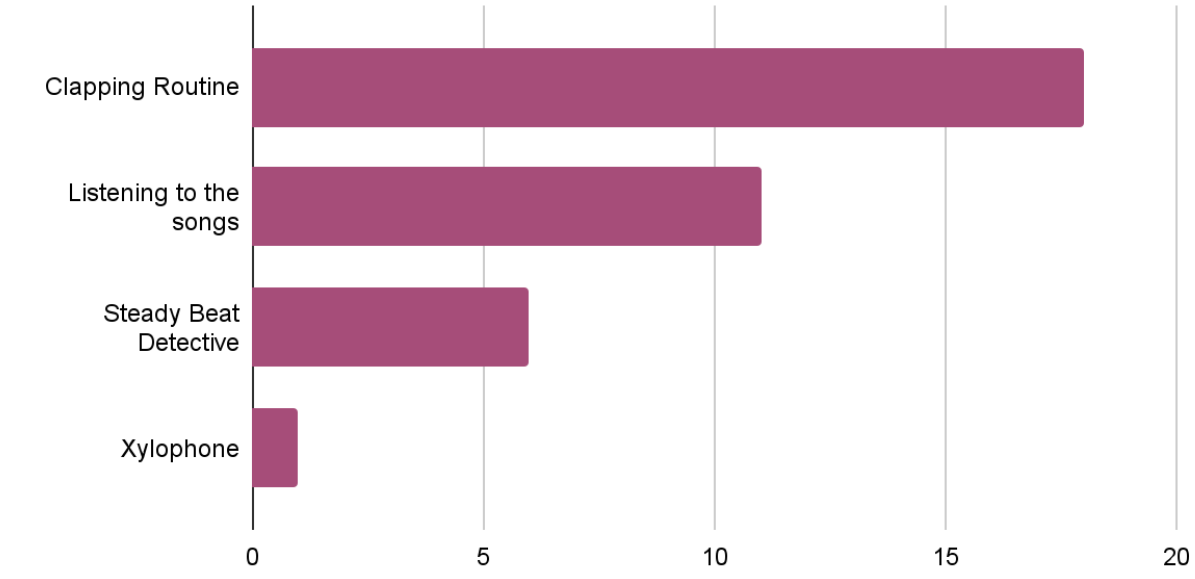
Would you teach any of the things we did to a friend or family member?

Regarding teacher-selected music only



If yes, which activities would you share?

Regarding teacher-selected music only



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