YOUNG PEOPLE AND POPULAR MUSIC CULTURE

THE IMPACT OF POPULAR MUSIC WITHIN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF CHILDREN AGED 10 – 16

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ABSTRACT

My empirical research explores the impact popular music has on the everyday lives of young people aged 10-16 with regards to consumption, identity and gender formation. My study employs a mixed-methods approach using data gathered from questionnaires and focus groups. My work is also based on an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation that draws from performance studies, cultural studies, gender and reception theorists. In an age of technological advances (such as YouTube and iPod devices) popular music consumption has become widely accessible on a variety of platforms, consequently my research questions whether young people are shaped by the music they listen to and whether this has a bearing on a child's performances of not only a gendered self but also of an adopted identity. In the evolving decentralised society in which we live, popular music can be seen to be an influential socializing agent within young people's lives.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis, and that no part of this thesis has been published, or submitted for publication or a higher degree at any other University or Institution. This thesis incorporates quantitative research collected for presentation in my Undergraduate Dissertation. Some of the foundational ideas presented in Chapters Two, Three and Four can be found in the outcomes of this original study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

'In many different parts of the world music is a primary, if not the primary, leisure resource for youth people. Popular music features in young people's lives in a variety of different ways and in diverse range of contexts.' (Bennett, 2000: 31)

In the above quotation, Andy Bennett attests to the volume of popular music young people consume and rely upon to entertain them. In recent years of great technological advancement, popular music has become portable, digital, faster to download and easily accessible. In this thesis, I examine the current generation of young people that have grown up fully submerged in the world of the iPod, social media, YouTube and the music video, and ask what effect popular music culture has had on identity and gender formation amongst the young people of today.

OUTLINE OF THESIS

This thesis is presented in five chapters with Chapters Two to Four based on individual research themes. The fifth and final chapter explores the relationships between each individual chapter and the overall outcome of the research, along with the outlook for critical research.

The first chapter outlines the rationale and aim for research along with the methodology used during the study. The second chapter will discuss the technological advancements that have allowed popular music to become more easily accessed. I will also discuss the way new technologies such as portable media players or web cultures are impacting on young people's consumption patterns. The chapter also contains an exploration of youth people's opinions on the popular music talent show 'The X Factor' and an investigation of what messages these types of television programmes are performing to young people.

The third chapter investigates to what extent popular music cultures have a bearing on young people's sense of self-identity as well as exploring their sense of a collective identity. My study will also investigate if the demonstration of musical preferences encourages friendship

formation and also if these preferences offer a measure to classify others. I will also consider the negative aspects of strong sub-cultural identities and discuss the implications of collective identity overtaking self-identity.

The fourth chapter examines how current popular music, lyrics, music videos and the wider celebrity culture that surrounds music artists influences young people's understanding of gender. I examine young people's perceptions of love, romantic relationships and gender roles and investigate whether the messages they receive from popular music have a bearing on their own ideas about personal relationships.

The last chapter sees some relationships drawn between the main chapters and aims to address the overall research question of whether popular music is influencing the everyday lives of children aged 10-16. I will also offer an outlook for critical research and address any issues that could not be covered in this study.

RATIONALE FOR STUDY

In order to address the growing developments, pressures and trends that young people are negotiating in popular music culture, urgent scholarly and social attention is required. There is little literature directly dealing with current popular music and how children are interacting with it. This is partially due to the way popular music culture develops so quickly and research becomes out of date and non-representative of current popular culture. While there is much scholarly material readily available that deals with individual aspects of my own research such as consumption or the construction of identity or gender, academic literature rarely deals directly with young people's identity formation as a result of their popular music consumption. There is research available that suggests that popular music affects everyday life and plays a role in people's performance of self. However, theorists such as Frith, De Nora and Rojeck write not about children, but about adults' relationship with popular music. Popular music studies, sociology and cultural studies literature often give an account of a particular issue such as identity or consumption but do not draw together the main aspects of my research, i.e. popular music consumption effects on identity formation in young people. In contrast with available literature, I wish to research the level of importance a child places on popular music and music-

related commodities during teenage years, when personal development and many first-time experiences occur.

What I feel we must also consider is that young people today are the first generation to grow up full submerged in the digital technological era. The way in which young people interact with popular music had fundamentally changed though the digitization of music along with its growing links with web cultures. For example previously to gain popularity pop stars would have toured to gain a following, but the Internet is able to showcase pop artists and music genres far beyond mainstream limitations (the YouTube sensation Justin Bieber is an example of this). I feel my research will be of significant social value and can offer an in-depth study of young people's interaction with current popular music cultures which will draw on and combine different fields of literature (primarily performance studies, popular music studies and sociology). Popular music undoubtedly had a significant influence on previous generations, but the ever growing and diverse modes of access to popular music culture demand urgent scholarly attention and make this a highly topical research area.

RESEARCH AIM

I wish to research the influence popular music exerts on the everyday lives of children aged 10-16. I have undertaken primary research in the form of interviews and focus groups with children (conducted with careful reference to University of York ethic guidelines), but I have also drawn on other interdisciplinary theories as listed above.

I question whether a young person is shaped by the music they listen to and investigate if this listening has a bearing on young people's performances of self-identity and furthermore whether this listening allows participation in a collective identity. Furthermore, I will investigate the extent to which the consumption of popular music and its commodities impacts on social relationships and gender negotiation. Popular music and culture is constantly evolving with new trends, artists, fashions and followers, so there is always space for up-to-date research in this field. For example, K-Pop first came on the popular music scene in July 2012, and between then and now 'Gangnam style' has been viewed 1.75 billion times – a figure that represents around 25% of the world population. Literature written a year ago will have different findings that were relevant to the time period in which it was produced. I aim to uncover current issues that young people of today are facing and having to navigate. I do acknowledge that my

research will also date, but it will provide a valuable snapshot relevant to today, and this will have historic interest in the future.

METHODOLOGY

TERMINOLOGY

For the purpose of this study when referring to youth culture I am referring to children aged 10-16. This age range has been chosen as it encompasses the time of adolescence and gives a good overview of the transitional time children experience when they become an active and free member of popular music culture. When considering what terminology to use when referring to the participants interviewed from the wider youth culture I decided to use the term children or young person. In Barrie Thorne's study (1994) the term 'kids' was actively chosen instead of 'children', as Thorne thought it important to maintain 'the kids' own terminology. I feel that unless her study is intended for the use of 'kids', then the relevance of this terminology is lost. However Thorne's idea of presenting young people in their own terminology is an important one and an approach I wish to take myself in some respects. Eder and Fingerson suggest another approach to how the representation of children's views in their own terminology can be achieved. They encourage 'actively bringing children's voices into the research project ... through liberal use of direct quotes from interviews' (2002: 197) and this will be one approach I shall use in my own study to share children's views in their own words.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Within my study I have chosen to use a mixed-methods approach in order for my findings to be compared and checked against each other. Predominately this study focuses on the qualitative research collected, in order to give a deeper and richer insight into the topics discussed. However quantitative methods were also employed to indicate key trends, which were explored further though the talk based research. When examining the findings from this mixed-methods research, I employed different analytical methods to interrogate data and show the trends in my study.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

I began with quantitative research through the mode of a written questionnaire undertaken by 130 children. This type of research creates brief numerical answers which are often very directed and binary. Yet being able to interact with a large volume of children allows me to build an overview of the opinions shared about popular music by children in this age group. I carried out pilot testing of my questionnaire to make it accessible for children of all ages and academic levels.

My research took place in two contrasting schools in southeast England, as described in their latest Ofsted report:

School One - Grade 4 (inadequate) over all Ofsted ratings

School One is much smaller than the average sized secondary school, with a student roll that has diminished significantly since the previous inspection. Most students are White British, with others coming from various minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average, as is the proportion identified by the school with special education needs and/or disabilities. (Ofsted Website: 2011)

School Two - Grade 1 (outstanding) over all Ofsted ratings

School Two is a larger than average primary school serving an area of mostly private housing. Most pupils are from a White British background but there is a small proportion from a range of different minority ethnic groups. A number of pupils have English as an additional language but few are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. When they start school the children's knowledge and understanding is typical of children nationally or slightly better. The school is part of a Primary Strategy Learning Network. This enables schools to work together and share good practice on a number of curricular issues. The school was recently awarded a 'Health Promoting School' accreditation. (Ofsted Website: 2010)

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Seen through these descriptions of the schools the children surveyed were from a diverse background with different social economic upbringings. I will be using quantitative research in the form of surveys that will allow me to emerge with findings that describe aspects of current social reality within popular music culture. I have decided upon using a convenience sample, which yields data that is statistically representative of the population from which the sample was taken, which for this study will be the two schools approached. The sample taken from each school was absolutely random within the age restrictions given, however due to some non-response from pupils I was unable to collect an identical frequency of data for all the age categories of male and female children interviewed. The other limitation is only having a data set of 130. When analyzing the data collected the key variables of age and gender will be examined, however other variables such as social class and ethnic identities are hard to pass conclusion on due to the data size. (Davies, 2007: 55-56.) When collected the data was analysed using a statistical approach with the outcomes displayed though a variety of graphs appropriate to the question asked to allow easy numerical interpretation.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Quantitative research allowed for a broad overview and exposed trends, but could not explain the trends found. Further investigation was needed, but this could not be that same type of binary questionnaires as the trends exposed deal with some sensitive areas that need to be explored in a different way. This is where the use of language-based answers as opposed to numerical ones is very useful. Qualitative research allows for more freedom in answers, which is both positive and negative: it is harder to be direct, so conversation can wander. Opinions expressed though languages can often be more hard-hitting than numerical values, but numerical values allow trends to be explored though focus groups. I made the decision not to carry out focus groups with children aged 10, as the subject matter that I would have liked to discuss would have been too delicate for children of this age. I will still refer to my quantitative research on children of this age but have consequently decided to carry out qualitative research on children aged 11-16.

FOCUS GROUPS

This form of research allowed me to ask a series of open questions to a number of participants and 'stimulate discussion and thereby understand (through further analysis) the meanings and norms which underlie those group answers' (Marvasti, 2004: 22). The format of my focus

groups often varied between structured questions and more general unstructured discussion using stimuli such as pictures. Both responses are equally useful: directed questions allowed me to guide the conversation and look for specific responses, while the general discussion allowed the conversation to wander into unexpected territories, and it appeared the children felt more comfortable expressing their opinions in this more fluid discussion.

In preparing the focus groups I had to consider how accessible the same focus group would be for children of all ages and I also had to consider how I would keep the children engaged for a 45-minute interview. A factor of trust was also needed between the interviewer and the interviewees, as when exploring uncomfortable subject matter like gender I wanted the children to answer openly and not feel it was an examination of their ideas. I decided that it would be best to use stimuli both visual and aural as a starting point for an open-ended question. I wanted the focus groups to be interactive so that the children could point to images or respond to some music they had heard; this also allowed me to extract personal feelings about popular music culture without having to ask directly. I felt it was also very important to strike up a relationship with the children before the interview started; I achieved this by firstly explaining who I was and the outlines of my project. I also felt it was very important to match the children's language and understanding levels, for example it was sometimes necessary to reword a question or give verbal prompts for younger age categories.

ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUPS

I carried out four focus groups with children aged 11-16:

Focus group 1: 11-13-year-olds - 2 x year 7 boys and 2 x year 7 girls and 2 x year 8 boys and 2 x year 8 girls

Focus group 2: 14 year olds - 1 x year 9 boy and 1 x year 9 girl

Focus group 3: 15 year olds - 2 x year 10 boys and 2 x year 10 girls

Focus group 4: 16 year olds - 2 x year 11 boys and 2 x year 11 girls

The arrangement of focus groups was at the discretion of the school and had to be compatible with the school's timetabling. I felt it was important to speak to each year group individually, but in the case of the year 7 and 8 children they were grouped together to suit the timetabling of the school, and because I felt that having a larger group of younger children might encourage more conversation. To analyse the data collected I firstly transcribed all recordings, which

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allowed me to carry out thematic analysis on my findings. I then analysed the prose looking for recurrent statements that begin to construct a theme, concept or idea that was held by the group. These ideas were then considered with regards to the current social context and the study of the social meaning of the themes that were revealed.

INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

Different approaches must be taken when interviewing children and adolescents as opposed to adults. Eder and Fingerson consider this type of interviewing in their chapter 'Interviewing Children and Adolescents'. Here they describe how it is important to 'represent youth in their own terms in data analysis and presentation' (Eder and Fingerson, 2002: 197). A suggestion of how this can be carried out is by actively displaying children's views in the presentation of data though the use of direct prose from the focus groups that I carried out. What must also be considered is the imbalance of power between the interviewer and the young interviewees. I felt it was important for the children to feel that the research was of some relevance or value to themselves and that the questions asked would engage them. I felt it was really important to have an organic discussion within the focus group using images and music as stimuli for conversation. I actively chose to carry out focus groups rather than one-to-one interviews more commonly carried out with adults to allow the children to feel more comfortable in expressing their views. I also allowed the focus groups to be less structured than a direct question-and-answer session, and I encouraged the children to steer the conversation at points through the use of stimuli as a starting point for discussion.

LIMITATIONS

Only working with young people from one small geographical area does have some limitations as my research can only hope to achieve an in-depth study of young people from that subculture. I do not hope to make large claims through such a small study, however I do see value in understanding the inner workings of one particular community and how music consumption is affecting behaviours in this environment. Although this study can only ever hope to be representative of the population researched, the trends revealed show the importance of small scale study like my own but also the need for larger investigations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DISSEMINATION OF POPULAR MUSIC CULTURE

Popular music culture has become one of the most profit-generating phenomena of current times. (Brown, 2006: 2) So what does it mean to be a young popular music consumer in today's society? Bauman defines the word consume as 'using things up' and says that doing so theoretically causes consumers to satisfy needs or desires. (2005: 23) Consumerism is no new concept, but it seems with today's mass production the rate and diverse modes of consumption seem to be ever increasing. For example the birth of the Apple iPod in 2001 has seen the digitisation of music consumption on a large scale. Furthermore with the launch of MySpace in August 2003, Facebook in February 2004, YouTube in February 2005 and Twitter in March 2006, popular music has also become intrinsically intertwined with web cultures. These web cultures have become very dominant in the everyday lives of young people, as I will later demonstrate, and I question whether they have caused a social change in behaviour and modes of communication, even though they are all still relatively young sites. In 2006 it was estimated that there were over 80,000 websites devoted to popular music (McPhail, 2006: 135) and these could be split into five categories: advertising platforms, celebrity sites, social networking sites, blog sites and p2p [peer to peer sharing platform] exchange platforms. (Rojeck, 2011: 202) The central theme of these sites is the user-generated content, which they show and this idea has been termed Web 2.0 (Beer and Burrows: 2007). Web 2.0 allows anyone to contribute to the web and in theory allows an equal playing field for society. This in turn allows society to feel empowered and have a spring broad to express views, a sort of un-policed sphere where remarks not socially acceptable in other circumstances can be typed. Beer describes this idea as 'a rhetoric of democratization' (Beer, 2009: 986); a concept echoed and amplified by Facebook's strap line 'Social utility' (www.facebook.com) and YouTube's 'broadcast yourself' (www.youtube.com). With advances in digital audio music downloading, faster modems and constant avenues to access the Internet, popular music has become far easier to engage with. A few examples of the growth in easy music downloads are peer-to-peer sharing on the internet; iTunes which houses an extensive popular music collection with their sales contributing to music charts; Spotify which gives free access to popular music listening; and most notably YouTube, which allows free music video listening on a very large scale. YouTube's own statistics state:

• More than 1 billion unique users visit YouTube each month

- Over 6 billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube—almost an hour for every person on Earth, and 50% more than last year
- 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube statistics: [n.d.])

Also contributing to music consumption is the lifestyle and cultural identity that pop artists perform, often documented though web cultures like social media or in You Tube clips. However there are some negative aspects to this new digitalised music consumption as music, music videos and recordings of concerts can be downloaded without parental consent. Theses web cultures offer little censorship and the music they house is often coded in urban language unknown to older generations, which makes for an un-policed sphere for young people to surf.

I question what these changes in popular music consumption, facilitated by new technologies, mean for young people today with regards to their music usage, behaviours of listening and perceptions of the wider celebrity music culture.

THEORETICAL INSIGHT

Many ideas of consumption can find roots in the theories of Karl Marx. One particular Marxist theory relevant to my own study is that of 'commodity fetishism', which was first discussed by Marx in his writings Capital: Critique of Political Economy (1867). Commodity fetishism can be thought of as the social value added to products beyond their economic value and the labour it took to produce them. As David Harvey explains, it is 'between the production and consumption where fetishism is attached' (Harvey, 2010: 38-41). The Frankfurt School from the late 1920s and one of their more notable writers, Theodor Adorno, later built upon Marx's theory. In a 1962 seminar, Adorno was quite explicit about his relationship to Marx: 'he identified him as the first great theoretician of critical theory and stressed the importance of the theory of fetishism for understanding valorisation as an abstract conceptualisation of social relations'. (Vincent, 2001: 495) The Frankfurt School for Social Research, originally the Institute for Social Research, was established in 1923 at the University Of Frankfurt. The research was predominantly concerned with the negative effects of an emerging capitalist society based upon the growing need for mass cultural commodities. Adorno, building on Marxist sociology, was particularly interested in how mass culture relied upon the arts in a fetish manner. As Witkin explains, Adorno's critique of modern society includes 'the commodification, fetishization and standardization of its products, together with the authoritarian submissiveness, irrationality, conformity, ego-weakness and dependency behaviour of its recipients'. (Witkin, 2003: 3) Adorno believed that the culture industry was presenting art in a way calculated to generate money.

Over time, however, as Longhurst notes 'such commodification had become increasingly widespread, penetrating all aspects of cultural production and social life'. (2007: 3) This in Adorno eyes then lead to the 'standardization' of cultural products, which in turn created unengaged consumers. Adorno believed popular music to be part of this cultural industry process, whereby songs and musical genres are produced in this manner. He also makes a distinction between 'serious' music, music that is very detailed and needs high technical skills to play, and 'popular' music, music that holds little originality and follows a pre-given structure.

Marx states '[r]eligion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.' (Marx, [1843] 1970: 131) If we take Marx's idea of religion being a mask for more pressing social struggles and apply it to the popular music industry, we can see how Adorno might believe that the music consumer becomes passive and just receives popular culture without question in order to suppress any harrowing problems in society. So in a secular decentralised society, which is constantly changing, people could be seen to be searching for a new substitute for religion and many of the rituals that popular music consumption demands could be likened to a new religion. Criticism of Adorno has been made in recent years, however I believe Adorno laid the groundwork for studying and understanding popular music and that his theories can be applied to modern society and popular music's place with in it. As British pop writer Simon Frith argues,

Adorno's is the most systematic and most searing analysis of mass culture and the most challenging for anyone claiming even a scrap of value for the products that come churning out of the music industry. His argument...is that modern capital is burdened by the problem of overproduction. Markets can only be stimulated by creating needs...needs which are the result of capital rather than human logic and therefore, inevitably, false. The culture industry is the central agency in contemporary capitalism for the production and satisfaction of false needs. (Frith 1983: 44-45)

In more contemporary literature the issues surrounding consumption are still very much debated. Barry Smart, for example, argues that 'identity and status are acquired and social inclusion or integration is achieved primarily though participation in consumer activity (2010: 39). This statement is very pertinent to my own study and some similarities can be drawn between this theory and that of Émile Durkheim. Durkheim's 1912 book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, studies totems of

Aboriginal tribes as social-cultural symbols and the way they perform values and beliefs held by that tribe (Bellah, 2005: 183-186) As Bellah explains, Durkheim believed that 'collective representations - beliefs - are essential in the process through which society becomes aware of itself' (2005: 184). Others are able to receive and understand these collective representations and beliefs though visual symbols - a theory seen in the French school of sociology. Karl Marx and Émile Durkheim amongst others can be seen as some of the founding fathers of sociology, with their works laying the foundations for the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, among other French sociologists. (Grenfell, 2008: 9) Bourdieu believed in two types of capital, economic capital showing wealth or profit, and symbolic capital, which is extremely relevant to this study. It is easy to think of capital in the form of money, however Bourdieu showed there was also a place for symbolic capital which could be thought of in the form of credentials and can also be seen in other forms of capital such as cultural capital, i.e. the possession of knowledge and taste, and social capital, i.e. affiliations and membership of networks (Moore, 2008: 103-4).

THE STUDY

Little literature deals directly with young people's interaction with popular music, yet I feel attention must be directed at today's generation of children as they are really the first generation to have grown up in full submerged in this digitalized age. This chapter will explore youth culture's relationship with music consumption though three case studies. The first investigates how much music consumption today's young people partake in on an average day and what modes of access they use to facilitate this activity; the second examines the use of the playlist within music listening and the final case study explores the impact of music talent shows. The findings of this chapter will form the foundations for later discussions by investigating music consumption patterns in order to discuss their effects in Chapter Three and Four.

CASE STUDY ONE THE IPOD AND THE IUSERS

As Bull states: 'The Apple iPod is the first cultural icon of the twenty-first century, ... enabling users to possess their auditory world in the palm of their hand.' (2007: 1) The iPod first released in November 2001 has become a household name, selling over 10 million units in its first three and a half years of production. (Cosentino 2006: 185) The iPod, now in its fifth generation of production has sold over 350 million units and is now also incorporated into iPhones and iPads. (Apple Press Info: [n.d]) In 2013 Apple revealed they have sold over 500 million iOS devices, all of which have iPod technology incorporated, meaning Apple has become the 'strongest player in the distribution of digital music'. (Cosentino 2006: 187). Not only does iTunes supply the largest number of legal downloads, Apple also offers the very popular iPod to play these downloads on. So what has propelled the iPod to become, as David Beer puts it, the 'iCon of the age'? (Beer, 2008: 75)

During this case study I investigate if the iPod has become a new cultural beacon for young people. I wish to explore if the commodification of cultural goods has placed any social pressures on children to gain a sort of 'digital approval'. Is it the case that young people feel the need to have a pair of the familiar white headphones visible to others to indicate the iPod somewhere on their person? I shall also examine how the popularity of the iPod has impacted on how much of their daily routine revolves around popular music culture. I also question if the popularity of the iPod and iCulture has impacted on the amount of time young people devote to consuming music.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Some of the preliminary numerical data I collected was used to investigate how important music is to today's young people as part of their everyday routine. I asked the young people surveyed how many hours in an average day they listened to music. The results can be seen below:

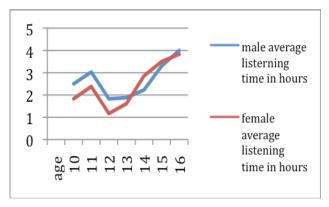


Figure 1 - A graph to show how many hours' children spend listening to music in an average day.

When asked how many hours a day a child would spend listening to music, it is evident here that the majority of children listen to music every day. There are varying degrees of how many hours they listen to which are linked to variables such as age and gender, but nevertheless music is a significant part of young person's everyday life. Even at an age when children are least interested in listening to popular music they still elect to listen to an hour of music in an average day. The general pattern is similar for both genders with the children listening to an increasing amount of music aged 10-11 and 13-16; however around the age of 11-12 the children suddenly decrease the hours of music they listen to. Even though the trend is similar throughout both genders there are discrepancies between the numbers of hours listened to within the overall trend. The females listen to a smaller number of hours aged 10-13 compared to the males, but the females have a far steeper increase of hours aged 13-15, however by the age of 16 both genders listen to a similar number of hours of music per day.

So here we can begin to see that young people are investing much time in popular music and how big a role it plays in their everyday routines. This made me question quite how dependent young people had become on technology and whether they could live without it for a month.

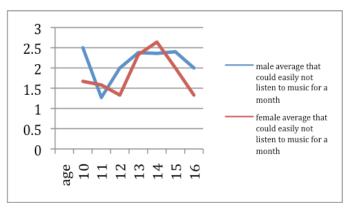


Figure 2 - A graph to show how easily children could not listen to music for a month.

The first thing to note here is that the highest value given was 2.6; so on the scale given of 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree this is a quite a low average result indicating that the children felt it would be hard to eject music from their everyday life for one month. The general pattern shows a decrease around the age of 11 and a large increase with children aged 13-14 and thereafter a gradual decrease in reluctance to give up music for a month. After this age the importance of music seems to increase and the declining line on the graph shows how important music is to their everyday life at this older age.

In my focus groups I repeated the question, and the verbal responses involved a more forceful and defensive stance when the children contemplated the loss of their music access:

Age 11-13

Interviewer - OK so how would you feel if I took all of your iPods away for a month?

Girl 2 - I would feel pretty upset

Boy 1 - it wouldn't be the end of the world coz I've got a laptop at home

Interviewer - OK well how would you feel if I took all of your music listening devices away?

Boy 3 - I'd kill ya

•••

Girl 1 - I'd be gutted, there'd be nothing to listen to

Boy 1 - I'd die

Even at the youngest age group the idea of life without music easily accessible to them seems unbearable. In desperation Boy 1 even tried to find an alternative way of listening to music and this was also seen in older focus groups:

Age 15

Interviewer - And how would you feel if I took your iPod or music-playing device away for a month?

Girl 1 - Arr I couldn't do it

Boy 2 - Jump off a building

Girl 1 - I listen to a lot of radio though

Boy 1 - I have a lot of CDs but if I couldn't listen to them I really would jump off a building

Girl 1 - I like the iPod because it gives me a random song or I can listen to the radio on my iPod because if I don't know what I want to listen to I can pick that up instead

Girl 2 - not having it for a month would be like a nightmare because I listen to music like every second

Interviewer - OK so it's really bad

Girl 2 - really terrible

The importance young people place on being able to listen to music as much as they like is quite startling. Music is very much part of the everyday routine of young people and I question how much the birth of the iPod has facilitated a change in how young people use popular music and how important it is to be involved with the contemporary music scene.

Some of the first numerical data I collected was used to ascertain how many of the young people surveyed owned an iPod or music-playing device. The results can be seen below:

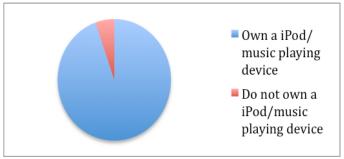


Figure 3 - A graph to show the percentage of children that own an iPod/music-playing device.

Out of all 130 children that were asked only 7 (5%) did not own their own iPod/music-playing device, indicating quite how accessible music is to the everyday lives of young people. This data was taken in an area of relative poverty so for 95% of children to own such a device goes to show quite how much importance is placed on access to music within the young people's community. Yet what is not clear here is how the young people felt about owning an Apple iPod opposed to different music playing device equivalent. This is something I explored though focus groups and saw quite a difference in the response I received at different ages.

Age 11 - 13

Interviewer - OK so would you say it matters if you have an iPod or is an mp4 player that does the same thing OK?

Boy 3 - they do the same thing

Interviewer - OK

Girl 1 think maybe iPods are better?

At this age young people seem to feel it is not that important to own an iPod but there is some questioning from girl 1, which could suggest that at least some children are a little confused. Everyone in this focus group (along with all the other focus groups) was able to identify an image shown as an iPod but the above responses could suggest that the cultural brand power of iPod has not quite reached children at this age. However as young people grow older this certainly changes, which can be seen in the responses from the 14 and 16-year-olds interviewed:

Age 14

Interviewer - OK so say you could choose between an iPod or is a MP4 player that does all the same things what would you go for?

Boy 1 - and Girl 1 - the iPod

Interviewer - OK why is that?

Girl 1 - well it's better

Boy 1 - yeah and everyone in my family has something to do with Apple and I just find it so much easier cause I'm used to them and everything

Age 16

Interviewer - OK so does it matter if you have an iPod or is any music player OK?

Girl 1 - no it has to be a new iPod, otherwise it looks retarded

The comparison between the more innocent childlike responses of the 11-13 age groups to the strongly brand-aware answers of the more adolescent age groups is quite large. This indicates that as children grow older they place more importance on being a member of the iPod community. In turn this could suggest some peer pressure to join in with the crowd, as to own an iPod clearly represents some Bourdieusian symbolic capital. The young people interviewed and surveyed thought it significant to own an iPod and this performance of being in tune with contemporary popular music clearly holds value among young people. This idea of performing to others that you are 'plugged in' can be likened to Durkheim's totemism theory, whereby an iPod is like a beacon for young people and can be seen as a new totem for youth culture. I explored this theory further within my focus groups by asking whether the iPod is a desirable object for young people their age:

Age 11-13

Interviewer - Would you say that for young people your age an iPod is a wanted object? Is it desirable or does it not really matter if you have one?

Girl 3 - it doesn't matter but some people they would say but you don't have an iPod it's so last year or whatever

Age 14

Interviewer - Would you say for young people your age that an iPod is a desirable object?

Girl 1 - yeah

Boy 1 - yeah cause most people do have one

The iPod is clearly seen as a desirable object, yet interestingly if the responses are analysed a little further it can be seen that the popularity is not because of the technical prowess of the iPod but because other 'people' deem them to be desirable. This is an idea voiced by a 15-year-old male:

Age 15

Interviewer - OK so would you say for a young person to have an iPod is desirable?

All yes

Interviewer - And why do you think that is?

Boy 1 - I think it's 'cause people have the need to follow a certain fad or phase

This boy showed insight, questioning how mainstream the iPod has become, yet even though he questioned the commodity he did feel it was a desirable object and owned one himself. This indicates that possibly the iPod holds too much symbolic capital for a young person to opt out of the phenomenon, as it is important for young people to show their access to the contemporary music scene. Therefore the iPod arguably can be seen as becoming a necessity for young people. This idea was certainly voiced by the eldest interviewees:

Age 16

Interviewer - Would you say for young people your age that an iPod is a desirable object?

Girl 1 - desirable

Boy 1 - it's a primary resource

Interviewer - A primary resource OK... can you tell me why you think that is

Boy 1 - urr cause music is like one of the number one priorities

Interviewer - OK could you tell me a bit more about that?

Boy 1 - it's your life

Interviewer - It's your life?

Girl 1 - basically

The progression that can be seen here is interesting as by the time children have reached age 16 the iPod has become 'your life' and a 'primary resource', which is almost an emotive way of describing the device and shows an amount of dependence on the technology. Yet at a younger the iPod is a desirable object because most other people own one, which supports Adorno's (and Marx's) idea that the iPod is a commodity that has become fetishized. The iPod therefore has some extra social-cultural values added to it, which can certainly be seen in the focus groups responses.

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CASE STUDY ROUND UP

My findings show the overwhelming use of popular music in the everyday routine of young people. Young people are become increasingly more dependent on popular music and the technology that facilitates its access. It could just be that if young people of today are looking to pop music culture as a new religion, with iPods as temples, and the listener as a disciple, the iPod has become a new totem of society. The iPod now offers a visual symbol that apparently indicates that individuals are plugged into the contemporary music scene and this has the effect of associating the devices with popular music. It is this symbolic message that seems to hold value such that one 16-year-old male states the iPod is 'a primary resource' and 'your life'. One 16-year-old female points out in politically incorrect terms that 'it has to be a new iPod otherwise it looks retarded', so the iPod can be seen to hold some symbolic power.

It would seem that young people are able to share in a communal performance of cultural knowledge of music and social affiliation that an iPod brings by owning an iPod. The iPod is a vessel for performing affiliations with different musical preferences and sub-cultures while still being part of the iPod community. The cultural power the iPod holds therefore can also be seen to be affecting young people by supplying pressure to conform to the iPod community in order to gain a 'digital approval' from peers. It is not surprising young people's everyday rituals and routines have been altered by this huge development in technology with consumption of popular music now available with the slide of a finger in any location. The way in which young people's daily routines have been changed with the development of the iPod must be explored further and the effect of what they are listening to and accessing though popular music culture questioned.

CASE STUDY TWO PLAYLISTS

The iPod is often thought of as a mass commodity but what must not be overlooked are its very personal and emotional uses for young people. The iPod has made music listening and following possible almost anytime and anywhere, and because of this access it is easy to see how everyday mundane activities like walking to school are changed though the use of an iPod. As Bull argues in 'No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening', iPod users are able to use the music that the device houses to control time and space. (Bull: 2005) No dead air refers to 'the notion of seamless auditory experience' that iPod users are able to create firstly though music collection and then through music selection. Marjorie Kibby explains that the study of 'collection' as consumer behaviour is not a new development, but there is little study that addresses music collecting in the same manner. (Kibby, 2009: 428) The iPod must be considered as a personal digital archive requiring active participation in creating a collection that can be regarded as a further extension of the user, with 'particular understandings, practices, ritual, and identity forming properties attached to it'. (Beer, 2008: 82)

Though this case study I investigated the importance of a personal digital archive to young people and whether they use it as a way to organise themselves. I also questioned how advancements in technologies have allowed young people to collect music in a different way to previous generations and how this may have affected them and the way they carry out their everyday routines.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

I firstly felt it was important to find out if young people sourced their own music collection and if so what avenues they used. The results are discussed below:

Age 11-13

Interviewer - That's really interesting where do you get your music from that you listen to? Where do you get hold of it?

Boy 4 - iTunes

Boy 3 - I listen to like top charts and stuff

Boy 1 - iTunes

Interviewer - Cool

Girl 1 - watch MTV

Interviewer - So that's how you get your music but how do you find out about what music you want to listen to?

Boy 3 - there's like this little button on iTunes and if you tap it, it gives you a little tester if you've not really heard it before on the radio say

At this young age children's primary resource for popular music sourcing is the internet and MTV which would indicate that some guidance in what music to choose is still sought. ITunes was reflected in the responses I received at ages 14 and 15, showing that the Internet does provide the basis for much music collection. Yet the eldest age focus group gave some variation in their responses:

Age 16

Interviewer - OK and where do you get your music from that you listen to? How do you source it? Boy 2 - I guess CDs

Interviewer - OK how about you?

Girl 2 - I buy some CDs and I get some off YouTube and the internet - sort of mix between the two really

Girl 1 - yeah I get mine off YouTube as well

Interviewer - And do you pick what you want to listen to or if your mate are listening to something do you get the track too?

Girl 1 - ummm

Girl 2 - if it's good

Boy 1 - predominantly I get all my stuff from YouTube then if I like it I buy it on iTunes or something like that

Girl 2 - yeah

Interviewer - And how do you find out about what's a good tune at the moment?

Girl 1 - ummm

Boy 2 - I suppose if you go in YouTube it comes up on the side with other songs

Girl 2 - I tend to get emails from bands I know I like if they bring out new albums and stuff

Boy 2 - and I have rock music TV on my TV in my bedroom so

Girl 2 - like Kerrang [a rock music magazine] and stuff

Boy 1 - yeah I have Kerrang magazine

It would seem at this age there is a more active search for musical collections, which is most likely to coincide with a musical identity formation. The Internet still offers a large source for music collection and listening which would indicate young people have more ownership over their personal music collections as they are able to access the web freely and with less parental guidance. My findings show quite a large contrast to a 1999 investigation 'Young People New Media' by Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill. Their findings suggest that 'parents use various kinds of regulation of their children's media use' (1999: 38) and that most children 'buy CDs and tapes with pocket money'. (1999: 26) I suggest that parental control over music collection and listening have very much changed as shown in my own research. Now young people have far more freedom to collect and listen to music of their own choice with sources like YouTube and iTunes facilitating this. This is only possible if young people have access to the Internet in the first place, but as research by YouGov have found:

2.8 million children have a Smartphone, including almost a million 8-12 year olds (25%). More than one in five (21%) children admit to having accessed websites featuring unsuitable content via their mobile phone – intentionally and accidentally. 87% of children are aware they do not have parental restrictions on their mobile phones. (Carphone Warehouse: [n.d])

It is hard to determine how developments such as this affect young people's music habits, because technological change is constant. Another change in attitudes seen in my data was what young people said about when and where they listened to popular music. The results are seen below:

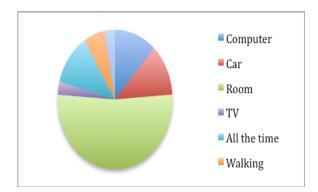


Figure 4 – A graph to show when females listen to music they like.

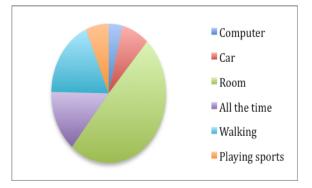


Figure 5 – A graph to show when males listen to music they like.

The most common answer for both males and females here is that they like to listen to music in their room with around half of all children interviewed giving this answer. This I find interesting as it indicates an amount of personal listening, yet in the written answers given it was not always clear whether children listened to music by themselves in their rooms or with other people, but in any case this could be regarded as personal, domestic listening. It is also interesting that many physical activities are accompanied by listening to music, which seems to suggest that music has the ability to in some way aid motivation or enjoyment of physical activity or possibly again alter the sense of time and space associated with the activity. All of the above suggests that iPod listening can manipulate attitudes to activities and possibly steer children towards more solitary listening. I also questioned therefore whether this change in musical listening has an impact on young people's emotions and whether playlists are a way to respond to a particular mood.

Age 11-13

Interviewer - OK so do you sometimes pick different tracks depending on what mood you're in? ...

Boy 2 - well I if I'm feeling really upset I'll listen to like a really sad song

Girl 2 - it would make me upset if I heard a song that someone had played at a funeral. That would make me upset

Boy 2 - yep

The responses here support the idea that music is used as an emotional aid and is often chosen to match a particular mood. Girl 2 also speaks of music that is appropriate to different listening situations. Within the older focus group the response received was very similar:

Age 15

Interviewer - OK and do you sometimes think you listen to different songs depending on your moods?

Boy 2 - and Girl 1 - yes

Interviewer - So tell me about that

Girl 1 - I don't really have a certain taste in music but I listen to different genres depending what I'm in the mood for, it's not just mood it's just what I like then

All of the above suggests that iPod listening can be used to respond to one's emotional state or match the activity or situation at the time.

CASE STUDY ROUND UP

Music selection can work in one of three ways on the iPod. Firstly, and most simply, the user can select one song to listen to and at some point during or after that song has ended they can listen to another individually selected song. Secondly, as discussed already, the user can select one playlist that has a collection of songs played consecutively in order to create a sort of album, often with an emotional use or connective theme applied. Thirdly, there is a shuffle setting that directs the iPod to randomly select individual songs from the entire music collection housed on the iPod. The way in which the iUser is able to create and then carry their own personal music library shows the importance of organisation and modes of selection in order to select music relevant to one's mood, activity or social situation. This altering and fluid form of usage seems to attract young people and give them ownership over their own listening and usage. The associated memories and feelings that a particular song can generate also allow the iPod user to manipulate their own emotions. As Bull describes, consumers now have the ability to create their own soundworlds. (Bull, 2005: 347) This in turn encourages iPod users to organise personal music archives into playlists that can deliver soundworlds that may have a particular meaning or evoke a particular emotion. Playlists allow iPod users to not only manipulate their own emotion but also predict their mood as they listen to a combination of songs that after time will be inscribed into their memory as a collection of, for example, happy songs, with each individual song having its own 'happy' reason for selection by the listener.

My findings indicate young people are now choosing to use the Internet as a way to source music though sites such as iTunes and YouTube. The popularity of choosing music in this way is certainly a change in attitude from buying CDs from music shops whereby much more control was enforced when children sourced music. The iPod, digital downloads and the increasing access to them has allowed young people the choice to opt for a more solitary listening experience than previous generations.

CASE STUDY THREE

MUSIC TALENT SHOWS - DO YOU HAVE THE X FACTOR?

'One of the most popular talent shows of the early twenty-first century has been the *Pop Idol* TV format' (Rautiainen-Keskustalo, 2009: 485). The first of these types of shows to be broadcast in Britain was 'Popstars' in the Autumn of 2001. The aim of the television shows is to find the next singing sensation though nationwide auditions and live televised shows, with the contestants' popularity in the hands of the audience. With the success of 'Popstars' many more TV shows with the same format were reproduced all over the world. One of the largest shows of this kind is Simon Cowell's 'The X Factor' which was first broadcast in 2004. The show is now in its tenth year, and with viewing figures often exceeding 10 million it exemplifies how this show format has become cemented within popular culture. Simon Frith states these types of shows 'have shaped the social meanings and our memories of artist and genres' (Frith, 2002: 277).

Shows like "The X Factor" include the audience in the production of pop stars in a similar manner to user-generated content on the Internet. This type of ownership over a particular person in the show usually results in 'mass produced "over-night" celebrities'. (Furedi, 2010: 494) Celebrity culture as described by Rojek 'now outperforms organized religion in the sheer numbers that it attracts.' (Rojek, 2012: 1) It is true that celebrity is no new concept but as described by Michael Ryan, it is also 'a recent invention made possible by communication media that can inspire and maintain ongoing interest, fascination, discussion, and attachment with particular people.' (Ryan, 2010: 150) This idea is also echoed by Frank Furedi who describes how the idea of celebrity has been around for a long time, but how it has recently mutated into an important cultural force. (Furedi, 2010: 493) One of the largest celebrity categories is of course a music artist, and this adds an interesting extra angle of exploration to my study. The generation of children aged 10-16 today will have grown up fully submerged in the rituals of music talent shows, so it must be considered how these shows have affected them if at all. This case study investigates if young people are watching music talent shows and if so what their understanding of these shows is and whether they influence the feelings of these young people about music and celebrity culture.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

I firstly tried to ascertain whether young people watch music talent shows and what it is they like or dislike about them. The results are as follows:

Age 11-13

Interviewer - OK so here are some pictures I would like to talk about with you (several shouts: One Direction! Give me that!)

Interviewer - Guess you all watch this?

Boy sometimes

Boy 4 - sometimes

Girl 1 - I always do

Boy 2 - I think it's fixed

Interviewer - OK girls do you watch it?

Girl yeah too right

Boy 4 - it's like a family thing too watching it with your family you sit down on the couch and watch it

Interviewer - So what is it you like about 'The X Factor': the judges, the contestants or what?

Boy 2 - the songs

Girl 1 - I like the people on it

Boy 1 - also that but you get experience say if someone has been on 'The X Factor' you can get famous in the newspapers and all that

Boy 3 -it's like on 'Big Brother': it's good to do 'cause you're gonna like get famous it's like a good thing

Interviewer - So would any of you like to go on 'X Factor'? several yeah

Interviewer - And what about 'The Xtra Factor'?

several yeah we watch it

Boy 3 -I like 'Xtra Factor' to see what their personality are like. My dad works at night and when he comes in he like watches it and just skips through to see about their lives

Interviewer - So you like learning about their life? Boy 3 -yeah

In the youngest age group there seems to be much excitement surrounding 'The X Factor'. The children in this group seem greatly invested in the whole experience. I found very interesting that Boy 4 spoke of how sitting down on a Saturday night to watch 'The X Factor' is very much a family activity. This confirms my ideas about television being one of the first modes of popular music that can be accessed by young people as these types of television shows about music seem not to threaten parents and in fact provide entertainment for the whole family. Therefore music talent shows are very much apparent in the early formation of children's perception of popular music and how they should interact with it. In the children's responses, the conflation of celebrity and popular music becomes apparent, as does the way in which celebrity is followed by young people of this age. As Tim Wall explains '[t] he show intertwines the quest to find the person with that elusive quality with the contestants' personal journeys of self-discovery'. (2013: 216) The contestants' personal 'journey' though the show is very much something encouraged though social media, television appearances and the more reality-based show 'The Xtra Factor', thus contributing to making pop artist celebrities. This idea of aspiring to being famous is a concept that is very much perpetuated within today's postmodern society. However the young people interviewed seemed to have a very positive outlook on fame and celebrity culture and could even be seen to have aspirations themselves for celebrity status. Similar themes surrounding 'The X Factor' could still be seen at Age 14, yet a new development is how young people starting to analyse the show:

Age 14

Interviewer - OK Right so I am now going to show you some more pictures what do you think about them?

Boy 1 - 'X Factor', talent competitions

Girl 1 - its kinda where most, not most but some pop star starts off by going to 'X Factor' and then they start their career from there and then get record labels asking them to join them

•••

Interviewer - So when you watch it how do you feel?

Boy 1 - I feel pretty excited but yeah I have mixed emotions about it like sometimes it's really boring and then the next thing it's like wow that person can really sing and like I don't like it when people come on and it's like they can't sing and everyone boos them and I feel really bad for them

Interviewer - Is 'X Factor' something you talk about with your mates?

Girl 1 - Yeah

Boy 1 - yeah on Monday. You're like that person went out

Interviewer - Do you think quite a lot of people do that?

Girl 1 - and Boy 1 - yeah

Interviewer - Do you think that catching up with what's going on in the contestants on shows like 'The Xtra Factor' is important?

Girl 1 - it kinda is because you can see what's going on like you know how some people are two-faced something on one side something on the other side so you can't tell which is the real thing so when you have 'The Xtra Factor' you can see the real side of them

At age 14 to participate in 'The X Factor' is still important to young people. There has been some development, however, in feeling empathy for the joke contestants, but the young people interviewed still felt it was important to participate in the reality TV side of the show and learn about the contestants' lives though shows like 'The Xtra Factor'. At this age they openly explained that 'The X Factor' is very much a conversation topic for them to talk to their friends about, and furthermore they believed this to be the case amongst most people their age. Yet I found a large difference in the responses received by young people only one year older:

Age 15

Interviewer - I'm going to show you another set of pictures now what do you think about this?

Boy 1 - manufactured

Boy 2 - i don't really care

Interviewer - OK so you are not liking it then

Boy 1 - yeah I hate it

Girl 1 - it's OK if I don't have to watch it

Boy 1 - the only thing I like is the auditions cause it gives me something to laugh at

Girl 1 - yeah if there's someone bad I feel sorry for them because they're having their dreams broken

Interviewer - OK so you all know what it is though and watched it before?

Boy 1 - oh yeah

Girl 1 - yeah

Boy 1 - I would be surprised if someone hadn't watched it

Interviewer - and why do you think that is?

Boy 1 - I think it's because it's always been something that you want to see then you have seen it and either liked it or disliked it

So here we can see a very large shift in attitude towards the music talent show, whereby this TV show seems to be rejected. It would appear that at this age the children interviewed rejected the show, as it was too mainstream, yet they all have watched and are aware of the show. From the age of 14 the development of empathy for the 'bad' contestants could still be seen, yet at age 15 some children appear to believe that there is entertainment in the failure of bad contestants on the show. The fact that some of the auditions are 'funny' almost seems like a safety blanket to allow people at this age to be peer acceptable, in that they can watch the show to laugh at the bad auditions. This attitude was also apparent within the eldest focus group:

Age 16

Interviewer - OK great I'm going to talk to you about something else now what do you think about this

Girl 2 - hate it

Girl 1 - I do quite like it cause of James Arthur

Boy 1 - personally I don't watch it

Interviewer - OK why don't you like it

Girl 2 - well I think it kinda ruins music for me 'cause half the people on there well like I don't know how to describe it I think some people on there aren't the best singers and it's all about who's sort of got the best image it's not enough about music anymore I think

...

Interviewer - OK so how does it make you feel when you watch it, excited or a bit bored?

Boy 2 - I watched the first few then I stopped

Girl 1 - It's boring when the auditions are over

Girl 2 - it's the same over and over

Interviewer - OK so why are the auditions better?

Girl 2 - because you can watch people fail

Girl 1 - it's funny

Girl 2 - I think the auditions are really horrible

The young people of this age still disliked the programme but were all still aware of it and Girl 1 'likes it 'cause of James Arthur', who was the winner of the ninth series. Girl 1 was the only student who commented that she liked the show and this could be because James Arthur (a 24-year-old 'hipster') is likely to be marketed at 16-year-old girls. Girl 2 felt strongly that image was a large part of success in the show as opposed to talent and this put her off. She later said she felt like the watching the show is the same experience she has already had. Yet she does think the auditions are the best part as she can watch people fail but quickly admits that it is a horrible process. It would appear that even at this age when young people are starting to question shows like this they still need to find a middle path between rejecting the show completely and still being aware of the main talented contestants in the show.

It is important to examine music talent shows as they can be one of the first performances of popular music culture that young people receive. It could be suggested that in these early years exposure to this type of music may be influential. At a young age children receive information and often take it at face value, and therefore this information, some of which is unrealistic, starts to aid their construction of not only popular music but also celebrity and fandom. Yet when children become older they seem

to question the programme and the music it produces but it could be by this point music talent shows have already influenced young people as discussed below. In shows like 'The X Factor' the messages that are being performed must be examined according to the different stages of the show:

Auditions:

The first thing to note here is the bad auditions. These become almost like a guilty pleasure and the audience laughs at how contestants have been set up for a fall by the TV production. Once they have been humiliated by the judges' cutting comments they leave disheartened. The worst part about this process is that the audience is encouraged to find this funny or boo the contestant. This is quite a sinister act to view on a television show and the entertainment here is in another person's misfortune. If this message was televised in any other format I believe it would not go as unnoticed as it does on music talent shows. Young people are receiving the message here that it is acceptable to laugh and heckle at others' misfortune, which is not a positive message. On the other hand if a contestant is talented the judges often use very suggestive language, for example saying that a contestant 'has the whole package'. Success in the audition round it would seem depends on more than just musical talent, and this possibly constructs or confirms ideas about image to young people.

The live shows:

At the start of the live shows the contestants have a makeover transforming them into 'an artist'. This represents yet a further performance of image and gender within the popular music sphere. From this point the final ten contestants receive much more media spotlight and their personal lives seem to become almost as important as their musical performance on Saturday night. This media storm is amplified through social media, leading to fandom as viewers start to get behind their favourite artist on the show. The contestants are knocked out week by week and this decision lies in the hands of the viewer's phone votes. This process of voting for your favourite contest to stay in the competition also gives an amount of ownership to the viewers and can also be seen as one foundation of fandom. The weekly television shows it would seem brings people together and unites them in common knowledge of the same event. There also does seem to be a Saturday-night ritual attached to all sitting down to watch 'The X Factor' together. This theme can be seen though my own study, whereby the youngest children described how they watch 'The X Factor' with their family and feel that getting famous is a good thing and that 'The X Factor' is an outlet for this celebrity status. This is certainly echoed as the children get older; however older children also start to question the messages on the show like the humiliation of the failed auditions. By the oldest age group they start to resent the show for its

branding of image (a good image often means success), however it would seem they need to steer a middle course by questioning the show but still keeping informed about it. The idea that a good image is needed to be successful in music is also shown in my numerical data in the responses to the question: What is more important: a good voice or a good image in a music artist?

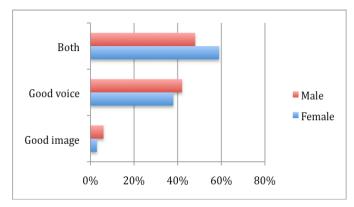


Figure 6 - A graph to show the importance that children place on a good voice, image or both.

Around half of the children interviewed felt it was important to have both a good voice and image. With regards to the other half interviewed in this survey, the majority thought a good voice was the most important characteristic in a pop artist with a small percentage believing that in fact a good image is the most important attribute. I suggest that music talent shows represent some of the first exposure to popular music culture young people are openly allowed. This type of music culture is one that encourages celebrity, fame and stardom and suggests to young people that music artists are very much dependent on image as well as talent.

CASE STUDY ROUND UP

In some respects the importance that television holds within popular music and youth culture has been overlooked, as a TV audience is often not regarded as a music audience (Frith, 2002: 277-89). Within these types of shows it is hard to draw a distinction between the TV personality and the 'pop star'. These shows warrant attention, however, as in the early stages of musical identity construction TV holds much power in performing to young people ideas about musical genres and associated behaviours. TV is one of the first modes of media that young people can access openly, as noted by Karen Lury in her work 'Chewing gum for the ears: children's television and popular music' (2004), so TV therefore can be understood as laying the foundation for negotiating celebrity musical culture. 'The X Factor' is a key example of this process as it openly shows the process of manufacturing celebrity and stardom (Holmes, 2004: 148). This winner of the ninth series, James Arthur, has sold over one million copies of his first single 'Impossible' in the UK alone. The success of the music talent show format 'indicates that television truly is an important medium in twenty-first century popular music culture'. (Rautiainen-Keskustalo, 2009: 490)

Every child in the focus groups could instantly tell me that the images I was showing them were representing 'The X Factor' and every single child openly admitted to watching the show at some point. This was not unexpected, but what became apparent was the change in attitude to the programme as I worked though the different age categories. But whether liked or disliked by young people, music talent shows are consumed and followed at every age and the messages, branding and values performed about popular music in these types of show must therefore start to inform viewers' ideas about music culture.

CHAPTER ROUND UP

THE LINKING OF CASE STUDIES

What impact does popular music consumption have on young people today?

I return to Andy Bennett and his belief that '[i]n many different parts of the world music is a primary, if not the primary, leisure resource for youth people. Popular music features in young people's lives in a variety of different ways and in a diverse range of contexts.' (2000, 31) What must be pointed out is that this concept is no new one, as young people have interacted with popular music all along. However, although the attachment to popular music is still the same amongst young people, the way this attachment is facilitated within everyday cultural rituals has fundamentally changed. In previous generations there might have been one radio owned by a family which would have been in a central room of the house and this enabled listening to be a group activity with less choice of music to listen to and more control for the parents over what and for how long music was played. Nowadays 'iCulture' is very much embedded in the social psyche and has changed everyday routines. Most young people aged 10-16 in Britain now own their own iPod or equivalent and this has changed the way young people conduct themselves in everyday life rituals. They now can listen to music in a solitary way, which has at least partially drawn them away from group listening. In the Information Age they also have almost seamless access to un-policed web cultures that promote the knowledge of popular music, whether through positive or negative messages. This access also allows them to partake in actively performing musical preferences though social networking and web cultures. The use of iCulture has altered young people's perceptions of time and space and it would seem very strange to them to carry out some daily actives without music and appropriate playlists. Also taken into consideration is the social cultural capital that an iPod holds within youth culture and the need young people feel to be seen as 'plugged in' to popular music.

This chapter has begun to demonstrate that young people do partake in popular music consumption on a daily basis through many diverse avenues. It must seem plausible therefore that young people are becoming affected by the growing popular music consumption available to them. I believe this is very much the case with respect to identity and gender formation, which will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

CHAPTER THREE

IDENTITY AND FANDOM

In today's digitalised era there is unprecedented access to a wider selection and more diverse genres of popular music. Young people are also able to share musical associations with a far larger audience through the social media and music sharing sites. Being able to share musical association with others allows young people to outwardly express their musical preferences though fandom and shared behaviours displayed by the fan community. This chapter will look at young people's relationship with popular music culture and the effect it has on the performance of their personal identity as well as sharing in a collective identity.

THEORETICAL INSIGHT

Identity can be described as a person's construction and expression of their individuality or group affiliations such as gender, sexuality, race or cultural tastes and beliefs. As sociologist Mary Holmes describes, children learn how to construct the characteristics that society categorises, and this process is known as socialisation. Particular behavioural characteristics can be learnt through socialisation agents such as family, the education system, mass media and popular culture. Music sociologist Tia DeNora notes that through relationships with popular music, music must be assisting the identities of individuals, as they are able to 'find themselves' through music. (2006: 145) In *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) DeNora offers a valuable account of the connection observed between music and self-identity. DeNora suggests that 'music is a device or resource to which people turn in order to regulate themselves' and highlights 'music's role as a building material of self-identity'. (2000: 62) Many of DeNora's views are transferable to my research data, but in her research she only describes the findings from interviews with female subjects over the age of 18, which does not seem statistically representative and does not deal with the age group in my data set.'

¹ The observation of a largely female data set has been commented on in reviews of DeNora's literature. (Magdanz. 'Review of Denora, Tia. *Music in Everyday Life*.' (2001-2), on-line (accessed 21 February 2013)

Identity is also thought of as a performance, whereby individuals perform their identity to other members of society so it can be interpreted and confirmed. To analyse how young people perform identity, the work of theorists such as Erving Goffman and Richard Schechner must be considered. Goffman expresses identity as a performance, defining performance as follows:

all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute to the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. (Goffman, 1959: 15-16)

Schechner builds on Goffman by stating '[p]erformances mark identities, ... but everyday life also involves years of training and practice, of learning appropriate culturally specific bits of behavior, of adjusting and performing one's life roles in relation to social and personal circumstances'. (2006: 28-9) The sculpting of identity performance and the learning of 'culturally specific' information could most certainly be applied to musical genre preferences, and the outward expression of them to others. Moreover, Schechner continues to describe how rituals are learnt (also described by Holmes, as mentioned above) but are then performed every day and thus become 'restored behaviours' which can be performed voluntarily or involuntarily. (2006: 29)

Chris Rojek often refers to the work of Goffman, but does not focus on children. Rojek describes fandom as a 'strong emotional intensity or "affect" with the persona embodying musical and lifestyle texts' and also 'recognition of shared narratives of belonging that are represented in dress, values and musical taste'. (Rojek, *Pop Music, Pop Culture*: 85) This is a very important statement: it suggests that pop stars have a far wider effect than just supplying music to listen to. Rather they may generate a kind of emotional connection and the need to mimic the values of the star. He goes on to use the example of Marilyn Manson and how 'Manson exploits and develops goth beliefs, values and lifestyle in his stage act and music'. Rojek believes that fans do not only buy into the music of a pop artist but also the rituals they perform publicly in everyday life. However Rojek does not look into how the actions performed by pop artists that are mimicked by fans affect children's public performance of

their identity in the short and long term. If this idea of restored behaviours is considered with respect to Rojek's work on fandom, it seems plausible that some restored behaviours in young people are learnt as a result of pop artist public actions.

Since the mid-1970s investigations into music audiences and the subcultures they create though collective behaviours have taken place. The Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) produced some of the first research on how popular music gives a subcultural identity and can even be a site for resistance against dominant social or political structures. (Bennett, 2000: 17-20) This is very easy to see within youth culture as young people often adopt a type of image or make lifestyle choices that become a marker for their involvement with a particular musical subculture created by pop artists. Yet some later theorists such as Paul Hodkinson disagree with the original work of the CCCS. Hodkinson expresses his feeling that people can have different levels of involvement with different musical subcultures as opposed to being either involved or not. (Hodkinson, 2007: 1-23) He also portrays involvement with musical subcultures as a far more fluid act than was once described such that '[r]ather than having their lives and identities clearly set out by tradition, ideology or community, then, individuals are deemed to live out DIY identities which are both multiple and ephemeral'. (Ibid, 8) Yet Hodkinson still agrees that a collective identity is still very much apparent though different subcultures and acts a marker to others, so that

We define ourselves and differentiate ourselves from others on the basis of not the place we live or the nature of the work we do but the symbolic value associated with things such as clothes, cosmetics, music, household décor, cars and other consumables. (Hodkinson, 2011: 273)

This idea of a collective identity is something very important to my own study, as I believe popular music culture is providing young people with some important identity markers. One contemporary theorist that has written on the matter is Steven Brown (2006), but his work does not relate to youth culture specifically. Brown describes a number of mechanisms whereby music exerts certain types of behavioural control. Some of these include the way in which '[m]usic has an important role in bringing about behavioural conformity and in stimulating compliance with social norms.' (2006: 4) In other words, music can reinforce codes of

behaviour and contribute to creating the social structures in which these behaviours are performed. Brown also states that music has a 'major role in defining and reinforcing social identity, serving as a socializing force that fosters enculturation of individuals'. (Ibid) This idea will be investigated in my own study. Brown makes a strong case for music as a sorting; it is his belief that music 'serves as an important basis for sorting people into groups in large scale societies, creating musical-preference groups.' This idea is something that David Beer has discussed in 'Genre, boundary drawing and the classificatory imagination' (2013). Beer builds on the work of Foucault in *The Order of Things*, which shows the need and power of classificatory systems in everyday life, down to ordering cutlery or musical playlists. Beer builds on Foucault's theories on 'grids' and the 'encoded eye', which Beer sums up as:

existing classificatory orders are inescapable in our appreciation and understanding of 'things'. They encode the things we see: we arrive with an a priori set of classifications to work with. We inevitably use these classifications to see and order the things that we encounter. But for Foucault this is not the end of things. The classificatory system is powerful in shaping encounters but is not necessarily fixed and immovable in the outcomes it might generate. The encoded eye retains some flexibility, agency and reflexivity, whilst still influencing how we code and recode cultural boundaries. Foucault's suggestion is that we do not encounter things in a way that is entirely defined by the encoded eye and its use of classificatory 'grids'. (2013: 149)

Beer extends Foucault's thinking to musical genre and states that these are not always stable but the structure that is genres can be seen as 'grids'. The 'encoded eye' could then be used in order to fill in the grid by classifying within the pre-given structure. This is what Beer calls the 'classificatory imagination' which is a fluid network of grids for the encoded eye to work within. With society becoming decentralised and more fragmented, fewer traditional grids seem available and people are searching for current forms of structures with which to create order. One of these structures could be music genres and this would allow the encoded eye to carry out cultural ordering. This is of interest to my study as it is quite probable that young people/children are using the structures of musical preferences to order themselves. The need to classify could be one reason young people consume cultural goods. Much work on fandom and collective identity can be linked back to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, which

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was discussed in Chapter 1. Within Bourdieu's model it is possible to gain high cultural capital without necessarily needing other forms of capital such as economic to escape becoming a member of 'the proletariat'. (Bourdieu, 1984) It is therefore easy to see how valuable cultural capital can be in negotiating social situations. John Fiske argues that Bourdieu's model could be applied to popular music fandom to include forms of 'popular cultural capital', whereby fans are able to use this type of capital to order themselves. (Fiske, 1992, 33) Fiske also states 'fan knowledge and appreciation acquire an unofficial cultural capital that is a major source of selfesteem among the peer group'. (Ibid) This suggests that it is possible for underachievers to have high popular cultural capital amongst their peers though the outward performance of their fandom, and through this performance to command respect from others. Since the individual identity of a pop artist can contribute to the construction of the collective cultural identity of a subculture, we must look at the construction of pop artists' own identities. In Studying Popular Music Culture (2013), Tim Wall discusses stars as individuals and the way that fans may feel they have a very personal relationship with a star despite the fact that this relationship is not necessarily authentic. Wall states 'our experience of them [stars] is always mediated through the interviews, records, photographs and video appearances that we consume'. (Wall, 2013: 210) Furthermore stars are constructed to the point at which 'we feel we really know the performer's personality, but the star image is a media text: a constructed persona. (Ibid: 211) This leads me to the question: what attributes of 'constructed personae' are young people adopting in their own identity?

THE STUDY

This chapter will discuss if popular music has an impact on young people's performance of self-identity, and will be presented in three case studies. The first case study will explore the behavioural patterns young people employ when using popular music as an identity marker. I also question whether a strong musical identity aids the formation of friendship groups. The second case study looks at the notion of fandom and investigates the importance of performing individual fandom and musical preferences' to their peers. The final case study explores the positive and negative aspects of a collective identity built around musical genres.

CASE STUDY ONE

BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS AND FRIENDSHIPS FORMATION

Popular music has often been explored in the study of subcultures, yet in this case study I question if behavioural patterns associated with popular music preferences allow young people to find others with similar values performed through self-identity thus aiding in friendship formation and the structuring of sub-cultural groups.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Discussed in Chapter 1 was the amount of time young people allocate to the consumption of popular music culture, but this does not necessarily correlate exactly to open conversation about popular music. I wanted to ascertain how regularly young people discussed music:

Music is a regular theme in my daily conversation

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

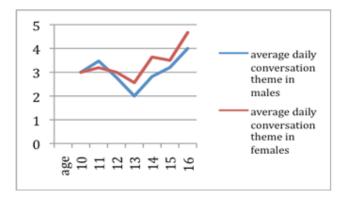


Figure 7 - A graph to show if music is a regular theme in children's daily conversation.

My findings show that music is very much a strong recurrent theme in children's everyday conversation; with age and gender the amount of conversation is altered, but it still remains dominant. The trend echoes that of the amount of time spent listening to music whereby there is a general increase in the recurrent topic of conversation as the children get older with the exception of 13-year-olds. Yet music can still be seen as an underlying conversation topic in youth culture as on a scale of 1 to 5 the lowest figure given by 13-year-old males was still 2 out of 5.

In my focus group research I asked a very similar question and at all ages the interviewees felt they talked to their friends about music. This response from a 15-year-old was typical:

Interviewer - OK so do you talk about music to your friends?

Several - yes

Boy 1 - yes a lot

Girl 2 - definitely

Interviewer - All the time?

Girl 2 - not all the time

Boy 1 - yeah but most of the time though

Having established that young people do often talk about popular music culture, I could start to investigate whether this conversation had any bearing on the formation of relationships. I investigated this in my focus group research by asking the question: Do you think it would be easier to make friends if you like the same music?

Responses from the 11-13 age focus group were the only ones received that rejected the idea that it would not be easier to make friends if you liked the same music:

Girl 1 - no - it's like, I like One Direction but I'm not obsessed - you shouldn't just judge someone cause of the music they listen to

Girl 3 - it's like if someone says I like Justin Bieber; you're not going to say 'OK I'm not your friend'

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The responses here seem very innocent I continued to question whether music is a good conversation starter:

Interviewer - If you're meeting a new person for the first time is it good to start a conversation about music?

Several yeah

Boy 2 - yeah you can say what you download

Boy 1 - say if you went past them and they were like listening to music that you like, you can go back and say what are you listening to? And it becomes like something to say - like I like that song

So although it was felt that friendships would not be ruled by musical preferences, music was certainly a good conversation topic and Boy 1 even indicated that liking the same song is a possible a way of confirming a friendship. This age group was the only focus group to feel that it would not be easier to make friends by sharing the same musical tastes as from age 14 upwards my findings were very different.

Age14

Interviewer - OK so do you think it's easier to make friends with people who have the same kind of music taste as you?

Girl 1 - sometimes like some people are like quite to themselves and don't share personal details and then you get to know them and then you can relate to each other about music

Interviewer - And what do you think [Boy 1]

Boy 1 - kind of the same in a way 'cause it's like if you start mentioning about a song they like oh yeah I like that song and you might start having a conversation with them

At this age it is interesting that Girl 1 describes sharing musical tastes as a way of breaking down personal barriers and by doing so allowing communication on the basis of a common interest. This feeling is echoed by Boy 1 also. This was very much the sentiment shared by age 15 and 16 interviewees. It would appear therefore that as young people grow, they sort themselves into

groups by musical preferences. Through this action of sorting by musical genres it would appear group formation is nurtured. This idea can be seen also in my numerical data from asking the question:

Do your friends have the same taste in music as you?

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

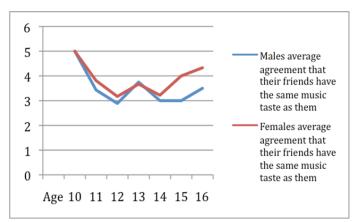


Figure 8 - A graph to show average agreement that children believe they have the same music tastes as their friends.

Children around the age of 11-12 feel that they have more independent taste in music compared to their friends, yet around the age of 13 there is a sharp increase in having the same tastes as peers and then more independence until the age of 14. From the age of 14 as children get older they gravitate around peers with the same musical preferences; more so for female children than male but nevertheless at this age, musical preferences have some kind of relationship with friendship groups.

I asked the same question with the focus groups and observed a similar trend that with age, musical taste within friendship groups becomes more similar:

Age 11-13

Interviewer - So if doesn't matter if you like the same music as your mates?

Several no

Interviewer - And would you say that your friends have the same music tastes as you?

Boy 1 - No

Yet by the age of 15 the females felt they did share the same musical preferences as friends but males at this age seem a little confused as to whether this is the case or not, which would tie in with the numerical data previously collected.

Age 15

Interviewer - And would you say your friends have the same music tastes as you?

Boy 1 - no

Girl 1 - um some

Girl 2 - umm yeah because most of my friends are Muslim and we listen to the same songs that relate to their culture and country

Interviewer - OK and boys what did you say

Boy 1 - I said most of the time but **I** think most of my friends are into rock and heavy guitar but in that there's loads of bands in that but we would pick a band to side with and all have big arguments about it then we would decide that one's better and listen to that but overall yeah pretty much

But by the age of 16 they is a much stronger agreement that young people listen to the same music as their friends:

Age 16

Interviewer - OK so would you say that all your mates listen to the same kind of music to you?

Boy 1 - all of them it's the same sort of general

Girl 2 - one of my friends does but most of them don't

Interviewer - OK so you two would say that you two (boys) listen to the same type of music as your mates but you two (girls) don't really

Girl 2 - a bit

Girl 1 - there's one girl that listens to country music and I'm like wow

Interviewer - OK

Girl 2 - yeah

Girl 1 - actually yeah

Boy 1 - yeah if you can hear what someone's listening to

Boy 2 - I don't get along with people if they have completely different music tastes like

Girl 2 - well yeah because sometimes personality can be based around music

Boy 2 - well if they kinda dissed my music

Girl 1 - you can get angry

Boy 2 - I diss it back then it gets into an argument

Girl 1 - yeah

Boy 2 - that what happens

At this age the responses from both males and females indicated a connection between musical taste and friendships. Boy 2 does not get along with people if they have completely different music tastes and Girl 2 believes this is because personalities are based around music. This is a very interesting response as here the young people themselves are starting to believe that popular music has a bearing on personalities and thus self-identity. The discussion continued to show some argumentative language about peers that 'diss' musical preferences. So once friendship subcultures have been formed a clear performance of fandom is very important at this age as is the protection of the image associated with a particular subculture.

CASE STUDY ROUND UP

My findings show that through the ages of 11-13 children are using music preferences to filter peers in order to find people with the same tastes as themselves. By the age of 14 my data shows that young people have sorted themselves into groups that share the same musical preferences, which is of significance because it is highly likely that they may also share the same values, lifestyles and behaviours that act as identity markers. My data also indicated that females sort themselves at a young age in comparison to young males, suggesting that this mode of sorting is possibly more effective or important among young girls. So music really does offer a way to find like-minded people and I suggest could even be the foundation for friendship group formation. For this reason I would agree with Steven Brown that popular music 'serves as an important basis for *sorting* people into groups in large-scale societies, creating musical-preference groups'. (2006: 5) Furthermore David Beers' idea of the classificatory imagination and cultural ordering can also be seen at work here such that people are sorting and classifying themselves using musical preferences as a structure to do so. Through this action of sorting by musical genres it would appear friendship group formation is nurtured.

CASE STUDY TWO

FANDOM

The umbrella term, fan culture, considers a collection of people that partake in cultural consumption of the same popular music artist or genre. In a fragmented society, celebrity and the desire to 'follow' them in fandom behaviour possibly glues people together in a shared action. Celebrity culture as described by Rojek 'now outperforms organized religion in the sheer numbers that it attracts'. (Rojek, 2012: 1) One of the largest celebrity categories is music artists, and it would seem young people want to follow stars in order to glue themselves together with others in a shared action. Building on Dyers' 1998 work, Holmes and Redmond state: 'Fandom, and the construction of stars and celebrities, has always involved the "search" for the "authentic" person that lies behind the manufactured mask of fame.' (2006: 4) In light of this statement, I included in my focus group research the question whether young people search for knowledge about the lifestyle of music artists and if they outwardly perform their fandom to others.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Age 11-13

Interviewer - So is it important to go to concerts

Girl 1 - no

Girl 4 - no you would be listening to something you know and when they show you the concerts on the TV they don't show you all of it like it's been adjusted

Girl 3 - yeah they put extra stuff in

Girl 1 - I didn't go to my first concert till last year but it doesn't matter if you have been to the concert

At this young age showing overt fandom or association with one particular music artist does not seem that important to the children. However there was a large difference in responses received at the age of 14:

² In the studies of urban sociology, a fragmented society denotes the lack of connections between society such as religion or shared culture in social structure. This idea is descried by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in *The Individualized Society* (2001), in which he also refers to Norbert Elias' *The Society of Individuals* (1991).

Age 14:

Interviewer - OK and do you like to find out information about the pop artist's life or just listen to their music?

Boy 1 - yeah

Interviewer - OK tell me a bit about that then

Boy 1 - well I know everything about Lady Gaga, what time she was born, umm where she was born and what her real name is and like her family

Interviewer - and why do you want to know that sort of stuff?

Boy 1 - I don't know because it's interesting

Girl 1 - yeah

Boy 1 - to show like how she has changed as a person when she went from Stephanie to Gaga and the differences

Interviewer - OK how do you source that information so where do you go to find out about it?

Girl 1 - Well it's normally on Twitter or Facebook

Boy 1 - Google Wiki

The search for more personal details of pop artists as an active action on the child's part is very apparent in this focus group. To children aged 14, it would appear very important to source celebrity knowledge of favourite pop artists, but at this age the action appears to be carried out because of a love for the star and not necessarily to outwardly perform fandom to others.

Age 15

Interviewer - And would you say going to concerts or festivals is important?

Boy 1 - yeah I think it intensifies it doesn't it cause you want to prove to yourself that you like that band or that person but I think if you have it you feel like you have done something to feel like you deserve it

Interviewer - OK cool and do you like just listening to music or do you like to find out about lifestyles of bands too?

Girl 1 - I really like listening to music but I really like learning about people too but it can put me off 'cause I really don't like drugs and stuff and even programmes [UK spelling] I watch it sometimes ruins it for me

I was particularly interested by Boy 1's response as it would appear very important to him to be

openly seen to perform fandom. Seeing a band live seems to hold a special badge of honour among young people as it could be seen to hold a certain amount of cultural capital. Girl 1 talks about some of the negative aspects of celebrity culture such as drugs, which clearly concern her.

Age 16

Interviewer - So would you say it is important to find out about stars' lives and does that make you more or less of a fan?

Boy 1 - if you know they are one of your favorite bands then it's good to have lots of extra information

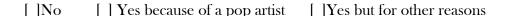
Girl 1 - no you want to know

Boy 2 - not much of it but as much as you really want I suppose

Girl 1 - 'cause if someone questions you and you don't know you're going to look like a right idiot

When analysing this short passage I found many different undertones. Firstly it is clear that this information has some sort of capital and not possessing some level of knowledge might result in humiliation in front of peers. However there also seems to be different levels of interaction available as Boy 2 describes, yet it would appear there is a base line level of knowledge one needs to attain. I suggest it is this required base line of knowledge that drives the consumption of music celebrity culture. I investigated whether this rang true with young people:

Would you ever buy a magazine because one of your favourite pop artists was in it?



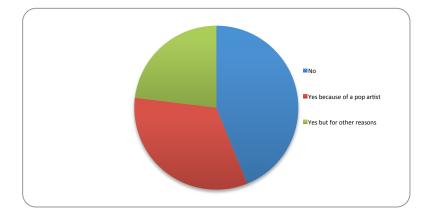


Figure 9 - A graph to show what percentage of children would buy a magazine because a pop artist was advertised on it.

This shows the breakdown of results found in the data, whereby 44% of children said they did not buy magazines. The remaining 56% of children that did buy magazines is represented below in Figure 8.

This shows that out of the children who said they did buy magazines, 59% of those children did so because of the pop artist that was in that magazine.

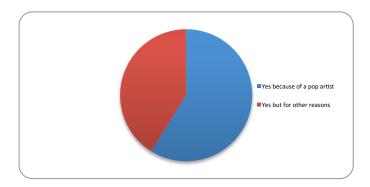


Figure 10 - A graph to show out of the remaining 56% of children that buy magazines how many buy them because of a pop artist.

The desire to consume media about popular music stars seems quite apparent, perhaps because this type of consumption is also part of everyday rituals and shared behaviours. One 12-year-old girl commented: 'when we get to school we sit under the stairs and like talk about all the "celeb" gossip'.

So clearly there is a ritual attached to this type of consumption as it also allows young people to share in collective niche knowledge that joins them together. However it must be noted that the images of pop celebrities are often manipulated by the media for its own economic gain. Yet it would seem however sensationalized the stories about pop stars, knowing about not only their music but also their personal life and image represents potential power among young people.

CASE STUDY ROUND UP

My findings show the importance young people place on openly performing individual fandom to their peers. Technological advances such as fast and portable connections to the Internet, social media and blogs have allowed celebrities to be turned into an object of mass consumption. I return to John Fiske's Bourdieusian model of 'popular cultural capital' to explain this. A performance of fandom, whether that be going to a concert, styling one's image in a similar way or just the possession of knowledge amounts to popular cultural capital. This type of capital I argue holds the most power among young people over other forms such as economic or social capital, and this is why it is important to children to acquire it. Furthering Fiske's statement that holding this type of capital is a source of self-esteem, I believe it is also a source of popularity and thus orders young people. For this reason I question Paul Hodkinson's theory of different levels of involvement with popular music culture. I agree this is certainly the case but suggest there is a base line of knowledge required by young people in order to be knowledgeable about the contemporary music scene and hold face with other peers. Thus the reception of such a large amount of popular music information for the purpose of gaining capital does suggest that music serves as a socializing agent. Popular music capital therefore acts as a way to perform personal identity though the exhibition of/investment in one's musical preference.

CASE STUDY THREE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

According to Wall, popular music culture is 'part of the process of identity-making'. (Wall, 2013: 223) Yet there are two types of identity that must be considered: personal identity and collective identity. Personal or self-identity can be described as the construction of self though gender, sexuality, race or popular culture tastes and beliefs. This construction is carried out by affiliations with pre-existing social groups or collective identities. This theory was first described by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in their 1979 work 'An integrative theory of intergroup conflict' and was named *Social Identity Theory* (SIT). SIT served to explain the way in which different social groups interact, and it also suggested that being part of a social group constructs a part of personal identity. As Chris Tantia, Arthur A. Stukasa, Michael J. Hallorana and Margaret Foddyb state 'strong group identification has been shown to promote identity formation, self-esteem, and the ability to cope with developmental problems amongst adolescents'. (2011: 556) I wanted to investigate this statement within my own research.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Some of the most telling discussion about group identity was had within the Age 14 focus group:

Interviewer - And you said that your friends kind of listen to the same music as you?

Girl 1 - I feel quite individual but then again I feel part of a group

Interviewer - OK that's really interesting, so is it important to be both of those things or is one more important?

Girl 1 - I find them both useful like you have to be individual in your life sometimes so it's helpful but then again you're going to have to work as a group so that's helpful as well

Interviewer - And do you think music helps you to be individual and part of a group?

Girl 1 - yeah

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Boy 1 - defo!

Music is described as a mechanism that allows you access to a group as well as allowing you to show some individual preferences within the safety of a larger genre. The young people here are showing the importance of being part of a subculture but also in some way performing individuality. There are some suggestions here that a collective identity might be used when performing self-identity. But at what age does this formation begin? I asked:

Would you say any family members have a strong influence on the music you like?

[]No []Yes my influences the music I like

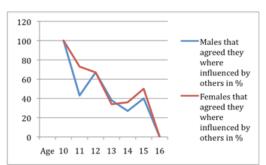


Figure 11 - A graph to show the average agreement that children believe that their music taste is influenced by others in their family.

The very general pattern for both genders here is that as the children surveyed grew older they felt less influenced by family members. However there were peaks and troughs within this general decrease. Also important to note here is the very extreme data values such that 100% of children aged 10 believe family members have an influence over their musical tastes in comparison to 0% of 16-year-old children. Young people's choice of collective musical identity becomes increasingly important as children get older.

To investigate this idea of developing a collective identity further and to examine the way young people interact with different subcultural music groups, I showed a selection of 'stereotypical' fans from different music genres and encouraged discussion.



Fans of Pop Music (Lady Gaga)



Fans of Indie Rock Scene



Fans of R&B / Hip Hop Music



Fans of Teen Pop Music (One Direction)

Shown below are the responses received:

Age 11-13

Interviewer - I'm going to show you some pictures. Can you describe to me what you see?

Girl 2 - One Direction (girl screams)

Girl 3 - oh yea

Interviewer - Can you see them? I want you to talk about the pictures. What do you notice about the people in the pictures? How would you describe them?

Boy 2 - there're a load of Lady Gaga people. They look really weird

Interviewer - so tell me what you think about the people in the picture then

Boy 2 - some people dress up as fans

Interviewer - give me a couple of words. How would you describe the people in the picture?

Girl 1 - they're not their biggest fan they haven't even got many posters on their wall. I have loads more!

Interviewer - So how important is it to be a fan of a certain type of music?

Girl 1 - I mean there are two friends they know I like JLS but when they came to my house they almost faint yeah and ran out of my room

Girl 3 - too much JLS stuff everywhere

Girl 1 - on the ceiling

Girl 3 - there's Aston everywhere

Boy 2 - she likes Aston

Girl 3 - you can't tell what colour the walls are

So here it is clear that the girls of the group were very quick in alerting me to their musical affiliations and Girl 1 even felt competition between her own level of fandom and that shown in the image. There was also some prejudice towards the Lady Gaga pop fan image and at this age of still refining musical preferences and therefore collective identity it seemed slightly baffling to Boy 2 as to why people would want to perform so openly their affiliation with one musical genre. Also apparent was the difference in answers between the genders: young females very much asserted their knowledge in the discussion and the males were left a little behind.

Age 14

Interviewer - Right well I'm going to show you some pictures now and I would just like you to tell me what jumps out at you?

Boy 1 - (squeeks at Lady Gaga pictures)

Boy 1 - I like that one, and there are little monsters and I recognize them all

Interviewer - OK so what type of music do they support?

Boy 1 - Gaga

Girl 1 - Lady Gaga

Interviewer - OK so you were quite excited by this one. What do you think of the people?

Boy 1 - they're devoted to her, like they actually support her and dress up how they want to dress up and everything like that

Interviewer - So are they more of a fan maybe?

Girl 1 - Yeah

...

Interviewer - And what about this guy?

Girl 1 - he is more of a rapper type of person that likes rap

Boy 1 - and hip hop. He looks like a dancer

Interviewer - and what about these people here (indie picture)?

Girl 1 - They're a party club type

Boy 1 - yeah

A clear affiliation with one of the images shown is still very present at this age in both genders but there is a development here from just owning posters to being able to share knowledge about the artist and even modifying one's own image. At this age of 14 the children found it far easier to name and show some knowledge of all the musical categories shown in the images, which I suggest is another example of the base line of knowledge. Yet as children get beyond this age, they appear to develop more negative feelings towards alien music genres. One 15-year-old male described One Direction fans as 'deluded – they love mainstream, they thrive on mainstream crap – One Direction are horrible, I'm sorry.' This sort of hostility continues to a certain point with 16-year olds but there is also an interesting new development of associated behaviours.

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Interviewer - OK then what about these ones? (Indie Scene)

Girl 1 - clubby

Girl 2 - yeah club dub-step sort of stuff

Boy 2 - what the hell is that woman doing?

Girl 2 - ha-ha I think she is drinking

Boy 1 - that's the sort of thing when you go to Magaluf or something like that

Here, collective identity starts to show its power by informing how a child receives another person depending on their image and affiliation with musical subcultures.

Interviewer - OK and what about this guy? (Hip Hop)

Boy 1 - umm seems like a middle-class man

Girl 2 - rap person

Girl 1 - laugh

Boy 1 - he looks like well-dressed, well not too well dressed but not tacky either sort of thing **Interviewer** - OK so do you feel like you could tell what a person's like by the way they are dressed?

Girl 1 - no not really

Boy 2 - umm well

Girl 1 - sometimes

Interviewer - OK

Boy 1 - in a way yeah I mean well I personally like rock music but if I went Magaluf or something I would still dance to club music sort of thing

This ending statement by Boy 1 is very telling as it shows that in a new place with new structures it is clearly important to quickly classify, gain understanding and join in a collective identity in order to gain 'popular cultural capital'. This also shows that collective identity is very fluid, which bears out Paul Hodkinson's theory (2007).

However there are negative aspects to a collective identity which must also be explored. Firstly, strong musical subcultures place pressure on young people to slot into a collective identity that may not suit all children. It must also be considered that in some cases collective identity overtakes personal identity in young people's behaviours, which certainly was highlighted in my own study. For example Amy Winehouse is well documented for having had a drug and

alcohol addiction and she often was seen in the public eye under the influence of her addiction. (Sean O'Hagan: 2011) She also referenced her addiction in hit records such as 'Rehab' and it is possible her public behaviours of openly taking drugs and drinking excessively and glamorizing the matter through her music could influence fans to perform in the same way. This idea arose in recent news with the death of a teenage boy Freddy McConnel (2011) through a drug over dose. His mother stated publicly: 'I don't blame him [Pete Doherty, Amy Winehouse's former partner directly for killing my son but the attitude to drugs that was engendered in him came as a result of the ethos Doherty espouses.' (Telegraph Website, Andy Bloxham: 2011) In line with work by Goffman, Schechner and Rojek, I would suggest that through fandom, young people learn restored behaviours from music artists' public actions which can become detrimental when these behaviours overtake personal identity and judgment. Another negative of collective music groups is the interactions and sometimes conflict between different subcultures. Frictions between different subcultures have often become heated but in recent years this has taken a far more sinister turn. Following the murder of 20-year-old Goth Sophie Lancaster in 2007, Greater Manchester Police now records attacks on members of subcultures, such as Goths and Emos, as hate crimes. Musical subcultural hate crimes will be regarded with the same importance as offences against race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity. (BBC News Manchester) This highlights the danger of

strong collective identities and the tribal-like fights that can occur between them.

CHAPTER ROUND UP

THE LINKING OF CASE STUDIES

My findings show that popular music culture has become a beacon of authority within youth culture. It can be used as a mechanism to sort peers though cultural ordering, thereby encouraging the formulation of friendship groups. The performance of fandom to other peers holds much power because of the potential it provides for cultural capital. Music fandom can also nurture personal identity during the formative years of adolescents. It allows entry into a variety of subcultures and the collective identities and power associated with them. It would appear that young people are not just dedicated to popular music, but that they feel the desire, or the pressure, to engage with the lifestyle choices offered though the celebrity culture of music. Yet relationships between fandom, musical preferences and identity are complex and change with age. My findings show that through the ages of 11-13 children are using popular music preferences to filter peers for ones with similar likes, and that they also spend this time formulating their own musical knowledge. Thus I surmise at this age children are searching for the base line of knowledge required by youth culture in order to be knowledgeable about the contemporary music scene and to gain popularity. They also must break away from any musical preferences inherited from parents or older sibling and start to develop their own. It is apparently only from the age of 14 that young people start to consider making their own affiliations with social musical groups. As discussed in Case Study 1, between the ages of 11 and 13, children are filtering and sorting their peers, but from the age of 14, young people have sorted themselves into subcultural groups that share musical preferences and behaviours. Becoming part of these subcultural musical groups also allows young people to partake in a collective identity to a varying degree. At this point it becomes more important to be informed about the celebrity culture of music and begin collecting 'popular cultural capital'. This capital acts as an identity marker for friendship groups to outwardly perform to other subcultural musical groups. My findings also suggest that females develop collective identities and form friendship groups through them at a younger age than males. Collective identities arguably involve adopted behaviours that can sometimes have negative effects, whether that be stereotyping and bullying or adopting dangerous lifestyle choices glamorised by the music industry. However I have also argued that popular music serves as a safe house for young

teenagers to formulate their self-identity thought the selection of friendship groups based on musical genres. Music must be seen as informing youth culture's identity and as a powerful tool of sorting, gaining popularity and finding like-minded people.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER ROLES IN POPULAR MUSIC

For a long time, youth culture has been closely linked with popular culture, yet little current exploration has been carried out on how this interdependence has affected children's negotiation and performance of gender and understanding of romantic love and relationships. Although there is little literature that deals directly with young people, music and gender, one 2010 study of Dutch adolescents does shed some light on the topic. The authors note that '[m]edia has been identified as an important source of knowledge for the physical, social and emotional aspects of dating romance and sex'. (Bogt, Engels, Boger and Kloosterman, 2010: 844) Furthermore '[y]outh oriented entertainment media including movies, TV, magazines, pop music, and music videos are targeted at a teenage audience and provide a vast array of messages on falling in love, relationships, and sexual desires; therefore, may shape sexual attitudes, values, and practices'. (Ibid) The birth of the iPod in many ways marked the start of the so-called technoquake that we are familiar with today, and which has had a significant impact on young people's collective and personal identity formation along with friendship formation as investigated in Chapter 3. With these developments and increased modes of access to music consumption, young people's interaction with popular music has diversified and is becoming harder to supervise, as noted in Chapter 2. Young people usually own their own personal iPod or smartphones which are wifi-enabled devices and can therefore access music videos, social media, fan sites and images of pop artists regularly, which represents quite a difference from previous generations. So the question arises: what are today's popular music cultures teaching young people about love, romantic relationships and gender roles? What are the challenges that face both young females and males when negotiating gender messages though popular music culture? This chapter will explore how young people negotiate these messages and how these patterns of negotiation impact on their performance of gender and perception of gender role norms in romantic relationships.

THEORETICAL INSIGHT

In the previous chapter I proposed that identity formation consists of a person's construction and expression of their individuality or group affiliations through such factors as gender, sexuality, race or popular culture tastes and beliefs. At this point I would like to define gender more closely. Firstly the definition between biological sex and social gender must be made. As Mary Holmes notes, '[i]f sex refers to the basic bodily difference (female/male) that interests biologists, gender refers to how people learn about how to be feminine or masculine and apply what they learn in living their everyday lives'. (2009: 36) Whereas sex is a given structure, gender is something with much more fluidity and most importantly something that is constructed. Young people learn how to construct the characteristics that society categorises as gender through a process known as socialisation. Learning these particular behavioural characteristics can be done though socialisation agents such as family, the education system and mass media. (Ibid: 36-7) Thus popular music culture can be seen to influence people's view of gender and even to help construct it through the presentation of pop artists' gender performance. As noted in Chapter Three, gender is a significant part of an individual's identity, which is performed to other members of society so it can be interpreted and confirmed. (Goffman, 1959: 15) (Counsell, 1996: 6) (Schechner, 2002: 24) So in fact the behaviours that are used to perform gender become the definition of what gender is. (Guantlett, 2002: 139) This means that when we perform gender we are, in fact, just reinforcing popular notions of what gender is.

Judith Butler's ideas about the performance of gender are highly critical with respect to gender identity categories. As described in Butler's book *Gender Trouble* (1990), gender is something that is constructed within a 'heterosexual matrix'. This matrix suggests that the concept of rigid sex is imposed on newborns, and that this concept is built upon by society and culture to yield one of two permitted types of gender, which in turn determines a person's sexual desires towards the opposite sex. Butler believes that the alignment of the categories of gender along with sex, sexuality and the body is a matter of political and social construction, rather than something that is naturally inherent in an individual. As she argues, 'the regulated cultural mechanism of transforming biological males and females into discrete and hierarchized genders, is at once mandated by cultural institutions and inculcated through the laws which structure and propel individual psychic development'. (1990: 100) Butler's take on identity construction is fundamental to my own research as her concept can be applied productively to

contemporary popular culture. Butler acknowledges that social gender roles are learnt young, but popular music culture as we know it today does not feature in her *Gender Trouble:*Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990). Many contemporary theorists such as Richard Schechner, one of the founders of Performance Studies, (see chapter 3, page 39) do consider popular culture in relation to identity construction and performance, and draw on Butler as a foundation for their own argument.

Within contemporary studies, gender is not thought of as merely something a person is born with, nor as purely socialization, but 'as an active accomplishment that is done differently within specific social and cultural contexts'. (Charlebois, 2011: 5) Here there is a suggestion that different subgroups within a society demand different versions of gender. What must also be considered, therefore, is the social construction of specific gender roles. As men and women are socially conditioned to become masculine and feminine respectively they also learn gender roles that 'match' their biological sex though social conditioning from structures held within society. (Alsop, Fitzsiomns, Lennon, 2002: 66) Problems can, however, arise with how society views these stereotypical binary views and the expectations they have of them. Moreover it is unlikely that everybody in society can placed into this binary way of thought that females should be feminine and male's masculine, so the concept of a spectrum is potentially more useful.

After examining what gender and sex is, and having noted its construction though social structures like popular culture, it must be considered how young people actually consume and interpret gender representations found in popular culture. It is one thing to note the various performances of gender seen in popular culture, but for the purposes of my study, it is far more valuable to explore how these performances are received and decoded. In *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989) John Fiske states:

Popular culture is made by the people, not produced by the culture industry. All the culture industries can do is produce a repertoire of texts or cultural resources for the various formations of the people to use or reject in the on-going process of producing their popular culture. (1989: 24)

Here Fiske is arguing that audiences are the people who determine the success or otherwise of specific products of the culture industry. This is a far cry from Adorno's theory, and it should

be noted that Fiske's position is also echoed by other writers. Schechner, for example, states that a performance is 'licensed by its audience which can, at any time, re-ratify or withdraw that license. This is true of all performances, though most of the time the audience doesn't know its own power'. (2003:219-20)

Popular music has the ability to communicate meaning verbally or non-verbally, and the semiotics in popular music that young people may choose to receive are deciphered and decoded on varying levels. One of these levels of interpretation could be popular music's semiotic performance of gender and potentially young people could use popular music as a source to learn gender code. When investigating gender within popular music and particular music videos, 'Objectification Theory' as first described in Fredrickson and Roberts's 'Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks' (1997) is of great use. Fredrickson and Roberts suggest that when women are seen in the media to be sexual objects for the pleasure of others that this in turn promotes the idea that women think of themselves as objects for the evaluation of others, a process which can be described as self-objectification. Aubrey and Frisby state further that media itself in its various forms is contributing to a culture of sexual objectification. (2011) In their study of music videos, which builds upon the work of Fredrickson and Roberts, they state 'that music videos provide fertile grounds for examining how gender and sexuality are portrayed in media because not only are love and sex predominant as themes, but the visual nature of music videos make shortcuts and sexual stereotypes commonplace'. I agree with this statement and the outcomes of this study will be used later as a comparison to my own findings in case study two.

There are some gaps and limitations in previous literature around the topic of gender and popular culture. Firstly there has been much more attention paid to young girls' and females' interaction with popular music than young males. (Sanker, 20: 143) There is also little literature that deals directly with young people's interaction with popular music and whether this interaction has a bearing on their own performance of gender and their ideas about gender role norms within relationships. Some investigation along these lines has been published/broadcast in the media, but due to the journalistic manner of the information, the conclusions reached tend to be speculative.

THE STUDY

The aim of this section of my study is to investigate how young people receive and negotiate gender performance and gender roles in pop culture's music, lyrics and videos in a very media-saturated society. I do not wish to overlook the challenges that face both young females and males when negotiating gender messages though popular music culture, so I have treated both parties with equal importance in my study. I have carried out my research though two extensive case studies. The first case study was based on a set of album cover images of popular male and female artists from the last two years. The second case study was based on one of Flo Rida's music videos. I will present the two case studies and analyse my findings in the Discussion and Analysis section, which deals with the question of young people's perceptions of love, romance and gender roles in popular music.

CASE STUDY ONE ALBUM COVERS

During the focus groups a selection of album covers depicting both male and female artists were shown to the young people interviewed and semi-structured discussion was allowed to flow.

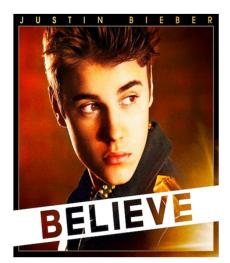
Shown below are the female album covers shown in the focus groups:

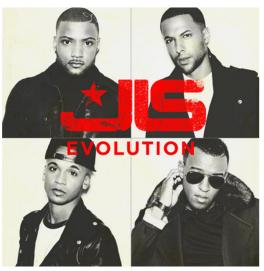


Shown below are the male album covers shown in the focus groups:











DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from this case study will be presented by age in accordance with the focus groups that were carried out. The outcomes of this case study will then be explored in the case study round up section, along with the overall findings of all the case studies in the Discussion and Analysis section.

Age 11-13

The first thing to note here was the excitement felt by the children when shown the album covers: it seems that they associated themselves with their favourite artist very quickly.

Interviewer - I'm going to pass round these pictures of different album covers
Noise - screaming

At the start of the conversation boy 3 asserted his heterosexual masculinity by passing comment on female pop artist Rihanna:

Interviewer - OK

Boy 3 - so hot

Girl 1 - what Rihanna?

I found Boy 2's explanation of why Beyoncé is successful particularly interesting:

Interviewer - tell me what you think about these

Boy 2 - I like Beyoncé she has a nice personality and a nice body and likes she knows how to act and everything - she's older than us it's likes she's had a baby

For Boy 2, it would seem that it is important for an artist to have a 'nice body' (an objectification of the female artist), but he is also aware that she has had a baby.

The young girls are unsure of Beyoncé's sexualised music videos and image, with Girl 2 stating 'some of her videos are a bit inappropriate' and Girl 3 calling for more age-appropriate music videos - 'exactly plus you see her dancing - she should make it more for teenagers and stuff.' This shows that girls at this age can feel confused about the overtly sexualised images that they see performed by female artists.

When I turned the discussion to the male artist album covers I only had a response from girls about them; moreover the girls only responded about the boy bands and not about any of the

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solo male artists. Girl 2 expressed her love for teen boy band One Direction – 'well I love them I've got that album' – which is not a surprise, as the band is marketed at girls this age. I will discuss in a later section what gender role messages these girls are receiving from boy bands like One Direction. The fact that no young boys commented on the male artists makes me consider if at this age young males are still learning how to think about masculine role models. Debbie Ging also expresses this idea though her own research and states that when exploring musical tastes in her study, 'boys [were] consuming some texts and genres typically associated with female audiences'. (2005: 33) It would appear that at this young age musical preferences are not made within gender expectation, yet this becomes less true as the children become older and stronger musical affiliations are made which are more driven by gender expectations.

Age 14

As in the 11-13 year-old focus group Rihanna was the first album cover to be mentioned by the children in the discussion, perhaps because it is the most sexualised and therefore caught the attention of the interviewees more so than the other album covers.

Interviewer - OK so how do these images make you feel?

Boy 1 - I think that Beyoncé and Rihanna's are quite sexual

Girl 1 - yeah

Boy 1 - and they want to show a lot of skin off

Interviewer - and how does that make you feel?

Girl 1 - a bit weird but again it's their album

Girl 1 admitted that the sexy nature of these female artists made her feel 'a bit weird' which could also be interpreted as feeling a little confused or worried about the images, yet this was not the case for all the album covers shown:

Interviewer - and how do you feel looking at this image (Adele) compared to this one (Rihanna)

Girl 1 - You can tell it's more of an emotion album

Boy 1 - and original

Girl 1 - and this one is just open and just loads of mixed stuff

Interviewer - do you think that people that listen to these albums have some of the same characteristics as the images?

Girl 1 - I think anyone can listen to any of these [points to the album covers] - mostly music depends on moods because when I'm feeling quite up joyed and happy I just listen to Justin Bieber because I just adore him, but when I feel down and quite emotional I listen to Adele because her music relates to what I feel

It is interesting here that the female artist is associated with more emotive music than the male artist. This suggests that there are different musical attributes assigned to different gendered artists. Another quite strongly gendered response I received was when the interviewees were asked if other peers imitate music artists.

Interviewer - and do you think the people that listen to this music try and imitate the artist?

Girl 1 - sometimes

Boy 1 - yeah

Interviewer - and how does that make you feel?

Boy 1 - like loads of girls in this school or any other school they always do their make up with the wings on the side of their eyes and that's like ever since Lady Gaga has done that everyone is doing it - but hers are a lot longer - same with studs - everything got studs on now and that like they're copying Lady Gaga

I found this a very interesting observation, as it would indicate a connection between music artists' performance of self, which is adopted by young people. In the case of copying make-up, young girls are also copying a performance of gender and gender roles, because make-up is seen as making a woman more attractive and feminine, and this in turn will attract attention, possibly from a male. So here there is also a suggestion of the pressure young people feel to be

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attractive to the other sex. This pressure possibly exists among other reasons because a lot of popular music has the recurrent theme of love, as described by Boy 1:

Interviewer - so why do you like those ones?

Boy 1 - they're like R&B and I think those one [points to JLS] songs are like I love you, I miss you

Interviewer - so don't you like songs about love?

Boy 1 - no

Interviewer - OK so why's that?

Boy 1 - I don't know I find it really soppy like it's like I don't mind some one or two love songs but too many songs are about love and I think they need to change the subject

Girl 1 - yeah

The young people interviewed commented on how most songs in the popular music domain are about romantic relationships and how through these types of love songs, music artists are reinforcing firstly the expectation that young people need to be in relationships, and secondly what those relationships should resemble.

Age 15

I think the development of ideas between the age 14 focus group and this age 15 one is most apparent: there is much more insightful critical analysis of gender from this age, in particular from the girls. When I asked the focus group what the first thing was that jumped out at them from the album covers, it was the gendered image of the artists shown.

Interviewer - OK, so I'm going to show you some images now and I would just like you to tell me what jumps out at you and how you feel about them

Girl 1 - contains quite a lot of nudity

Boy 1 - there's a lot of beauty that's some sort of visual aid based

Girl 2 - it's quite commercial

Girl 1 - it's very air brushed 'cause Adele's the only one - they're not calling her fat but she's the only one that isn't very skinny

Boy 1 - they all sort of fit into a standard picture

Interviewer - so how do these kind of images make you feel?

Boy 1 - it's sex appeal

Girl 1 felt that there was a lot of nudity in the album covers and further to this that there is an image pattern (such as being thin) that is held as attractive within society. This idea of a standard version of beauty was also echoed by Boy 1. I was also interested by Girl 2's comment that the album covers are 'quite commercial', meaning that these images are recurrent in popular music with little alternative offered. Another theme that arose was that of the aesthetic values of female artists, as Girl 1 pointed out:

Interviewer – yes, so how does that make you feel girls?

Girl 1 - I just see these kinds of thing as pointless, like when female musicians are all naked or whatever it doesn't make me like their music more. I like watching music videos but that will make me judge them more rather than wanting their album. It's probably more to attract men isn't it?

It is interesting that she was not yet confident enough to make a statement about women using their body to attract men, as shown in her questioning rather than affirmative manner, but it is significant that these questioning ideas are starting to become apparent in the young girl's thinking. Girl 2 furthers this point by stating how Rihanna's second album had more exposure than her first and that she is expected and encouraged to perform in such a sexualised way.

Girl 2 - umm I think it makes me think they're fake yeah like Rihanna for example if you look at her first album you can see the difference umm yeah I guess they expect her to do that and it's encouraging everyone else to be like that and if you want to be a musician you have to do it this way and wear certain things

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Interviewer - do you think there are other pressures on female musicians then?

Girl 1 - yeah like exactly what Girl 2 said Rihanna is a very visual example of how you can see someone being changed by the industry and what they are expected to do to impress the public and sell records

It would seem that both the girls are in agreement that there are different aesthetic pressures on female artists than male artist. The boys in the focus group also condemned sexualized images. **Boy 1** stated 'it's giving girls a bad name really it's like they have to be promiscuous which is never good'. Here the young male is explaining that there is an expectation for young women to be promiscuous and that this isn't always appealing in a girl.

Yet Girl 1 also expressed that 'aesthetically pleasing' female artists are not empowering young girls:

Girl 1 - it's like the Spice Girls is supposed to be all empowering not that I listen to them a lot but I think their music is alright without them being like that - it doesn't make them more empowered 'cause they wear less, it's like pretending to be more empowered but it just means like dressing more slutty to get more attention is what I see it as

Girl 1 seems quite condemning of 'empowered' women musicians because, as she sees it, female pop artists wearing less clothing are not empowering themselves or others by spreading 'girl power' but are in fact dressing in a way that can be seen as 'slutty', in other words as an easy sexual object or conquest.

I wanted to explore whether there are similar image issues in the case of young men.

Interviewer - talk to me about these ones?

Girl 2-JLS right there are two songs that I like then they go and take their shirts of and I'm like you just ruined it

Boy 1 - that one there Marvin he always randomly lifts up his shirt in videos

Interviewer - and how does that make you boys feel then?

Boy 1 - I just I find it annoying it's like everyone has muscles these days

Interviewer - do you feel like you need to have muscles?

Boy 1 - no you need them to survive and stuff but that's it it's just such a visual influence I just don't get it

Girl 2 - people like that expect to be adored because they're good looking it's just really annoying.

When commenting on the male artist album covers, Boy 1 stated that one of the singers in boy group JLS always lifts his shirt up in music videos to show his muscles. Further to this, Boy 1 states that he finds it annoying that everyone in the music industry has muscles now. It is possible that his annoyance perhaps betrays his own insecurities about his own image not being a strong masculine one.

Age 16

Again here the discussion turns to how the music artists are sexualised:

Interviewer - OK so what do you see?

Boy 2 - a lot of these artists are exposing their bodies a lot

Interviewer - OK

Girl 1 - they're trying to make themselves popular

Boy 2 - some pop stars aren't just known for their music they're known for like...

Girl 2 - sex appeal?

Boy 2 - yeah

Boy 2's suggestion that some music artists are not popular because of their talent but because of their appearance is a very post-modern idea supposedly held in today's society that style is more important than substance.

The young female response was not dissimilar from this male voice:

Girl 1 - degrading they expect us to look all the same

As a consequence of pop artists' performance of gender, this girl feels that society is expecting her to look and act in the same way. Young girls may, therefore, feel pressure to conform to this type of sexualised femininity.

CASE STUDY ROUND UP

Within the very youngest focus group, the girls interviewed seemed a little confused by the female artists album covers and in fact wanted to see less sexualised and more innocent images of female artists. The girls were very excited about the boy band album covers, but the boys interviewed did not pass comment about the album covers of male artists. So here a theme is appearing that children of this age feel some kind of unease when looking at album covers of artists of the same sex as their own. The young girls voiced this but the boys did not, and this is something that can be seen throughout older ages too. In the age 14 focus group, there was a shift with the girls and boys agreeing that the female artist images were sexualised, an insight from both genders that was missing from the age 11 - 13 focus groups. While a 14-year-old boy stated that he felt too many songs by male artists in the R and B genre are about love and this was an annoyance to him, Girl 1 from the same age group felt that more female artists than males perform emotive music. It could be possible that musical features are being understood as gendered and therefore could reinforce stereotypical gender roles. By the age of 15 the ideas discussed have become much more developed, showing that until this point young people have been in some sort of liminal stage of understanding and learning about gender negotiation in popular music. At age 15 the female interviewees feel quite strongly that there are visual expectations of women in the music industry to look a certain way in order to attract men and sell records. The boys at this age also contributed to this argument by expressing that these types of images in the music industry 'give girls a bad name' and encouraged them to be 'promiscuous'. Girl 1 furthers this point by saying that although some female artists try to empower young women, the way in which they do so still encourages young girls to conform to ideas of beauty and sexuality. It is also at this age that young boys also express their own pressures about body appearance by observing that boy bands often have very muscular physiques and that this is 'annoying'. These ideas are also expressed by the oldest age group of 16 in a very similar manner, suggesting that young males also feel like they need to conform to ideas of beauty and sexuality.

CASE STUDY TWO MUSIC VIDEOS

Since the birth of MTV or Music Television in 1981, music videos have grown in popularity. However, I would argue that it wasn't until the 21st century that they really took flight. When watching MTV the audience does not have the power to choose what to watch, but only has the choice to watch or not, which could possibly result in exposure to a wide variety of music videos. Yet with the creation of YouTube in 2005, the power was placed back in the hands of audiences, who could now choose what music videos to watch and consequently have broader access to more explicit videos at a younger and younger age.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

For this case study I began with numerical data to show overall trends within this large research field. I firstly questioned whether even with an increased access to music videos, young people would opt to watch them over listening to just audio. So I asked:

Would you prefer to just listen to a music recording or watch the music video for that track?



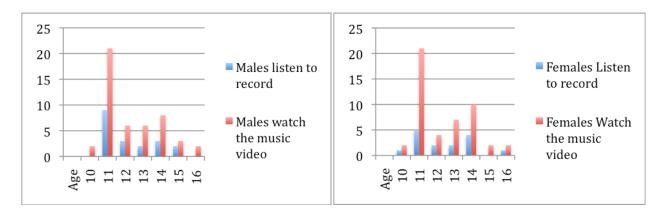


Figure 12 - A graph to show whether males would prefer to listen to a music record or watch the music video.

Figure 13 - A graph to show whether females would prefer to listen to a music record or watch the music video.

It is statistically interesting here that at every age category both genders would opt to watch a music video rather than listen to an audio recording. Once it was clear that music videos are a preferred method of receiving popular music, I then questioned how young people accessed these videos and whether accessing the videos was easy for them.

Do you have easy access to music videos?

No Yes on my.....

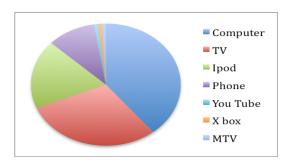


Figure 14 - A graph to show how males access music videos.

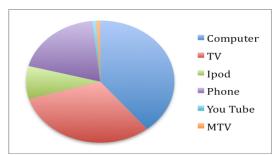


Figure 15 - A graph to show how females assess music videos.

The first thing to note is that none of the children interviewed when asked if they had easy access to music videos said no. For both females and males the computer was the most popular way children said they accessed music videos, and this could be though a variety of websites such as YouTube, which some children mentioned, and possibly though social networking sites where children can follow favourite pop artists. The pie chart shown above includes the ages 10-16, however it was interesting that most of the TV-oriented answers were received from the younger children and the computer answers appeared more so in the older children. I found this very significant as it could indicate that young children watch MTV to be educated in what music videos to watch, and as the children become older and have started to develop musical identities, they opt to choose a smaller variety of music videos to watch online (possibly in a more solitary fashion). I then asked the children whether they felt that music videos had more of an impact on them than just the recorded song alone.

Do you feel music videos have more of an impact on you than just the recorded song?

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

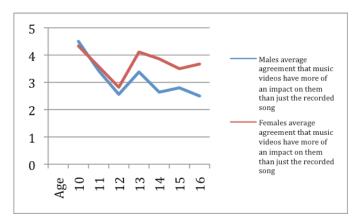


Figure 16 - A graph to show average agreement that music videos have more of an impact on them than just the recorded song.

Within the results it is interesting to see the large variation in answers received over different age groups, as children believe music videos have a very contrasting impact. Children from both genders followed a similar pattern where children aged 10 felt most strongly that music videos had a greater impact on them than just the recorded music. This agreement decreased until the age of 13, at which point it sharply increased, coinciding with puberty or its direct aftermath. After the age of 14 larger differences can be seen between genders, with boys feeling the impact of music videos more between the ages of 14-15 and then less by the age of 16. Females feel decreasingly less impact from the age of 13 until they reach the age of 15, after which they become increasingly affected by music videos. I feel the most interesting pattern here is that at all point females felt the impact of music videos more than males, particularly after that age of 13, and this could indicate the contentious content of music videos.

These preliminary questions show why consumption of music videos by youth people must be explored further. What we can conclude up to this point is young people of all ages prefer to watch music videos over listening to audio alone, that access to these music videos is very easy though a variety of different media channels and that young people, especially females from 13 years onwards, feel that music videos have more of an impact than just audio. Music videos

seem to be of great interest to youth culture, which becomes problematic when they also have the ability to emphasise gender, furthermore stereotypical gender roles, even more so than just the audio alone.

I continued to explore these themes though focus groups, using the music video 'Whistle' by Flo Rida, which was a summer hit in 2012. The song ranked 15 in the most grossing music of 2012 and sold 620000 copies, not including legal and illegal download and radio play. The music video has also received 225,654,190 YouTube hits to date. My first intention was to play the music video to the children in the focus groups; however both the schools at which I carried out my research thought that playing this video would be against the schools' safeguarding policy as they felt that the video was too explicit. So I opted to only play the audio for this song, which in fact gave rise to some more interesting discussion as every focus group could describe the music video to me without being prompted by a visual aid.

Shown below are some still images and lyrics from the music video:





¹ This decision made by the school is of great significance as it further proves that there is a discrepancy between what young children are officially protected from and what they can freely access themselves on the internet.

Age 11-13

The first thing to note here is that the first response to the song concerned its musical features.

Interviewer - I'm going to play you a song I want you to listen to it and tell me what you feel about it - if you like it or not (song)

Girl 1 - I like this song

Interviewer - OK so tell me what you think about it

Boy 2 - like nice and relaxing then it's got a kick to it and it goes all bassie

Boy 1 - it's like a little bit of pop then it goes guitar and everything then you got like your synths and bass

It is quite possible, therefore, that young children are firstly attracted to this song for its musical qualities and only at a later stage investigate the message of the lyrics. It was common knowledge even in the youngest aged focus group that this was a record by Flo Rida, but it was a female who was first to express scepticism about the meaning of the song. I asked in response:

Interviewer - you don't like the meaning of it?

Girl 1 - no I don't agree with it

Boy 1 - apparently it's rude

Boy 3 - yeah it's so dirty

Boy 1 - it's like on your holiday

Interviewer - girls?

Girl 2 - it might not be dirty it might be about someone that's blowing a whistle

Girl 3 - yeah blowing a whistle

Boy 4 - songs are about love and stuff... they should make them about something different - good songs are about what you look forward to in life like things that are going to come

Girls at this age seemed uneasy about the song's meaning but could not give reasons for this unease. Boy 1's observation that apparently it is rude was repeated as if this were a rumour he

had heard rather than something he had worked out for himself. He appeared to wonder whether it was rude or not, and moreover whether it was acceptable or not. When I asked the rest of the girls their feelings they felt very unsure and tried to take the sex out of the song by understanding and justifying the song in a more innocent way, which might be thought of as a more age-appropriate answer. Yet Boy 4 made quite a worrying statement that 'songs are about love and stuff... they should make them about something different', therefore implying that he felt this type of music is about love, and therefore equating sex with love. The group seemed quite conflicted by these questions and in fact when I tried to move the discussion on the girls continued to comment about music videos.

Interviewer - would you say with that song then the important thing is the music, music video or lyrics

Girl 1 - girls like should wear more than they do

Girl 3 - yeah there's a Beyoncé song called 1+1 and I listen to it because I got the album so I tried to find the video and it's her and a man like naked

The very young girls seem unhappy about women in over-sexualised images, and one can therefore conclude that these images make them uncomfortable. Girl 3 explains how she searched for a music video because she liked the track on Beyoncé's album and that she was surprised by what she found. This shows that music videos add another more adult layer onto audio recordings, which can be confusing for children of this age. It also shows that they actively search for songs not necessarily knowing what the music videos might contain, so are effectively stumbling unwittingly on these sexualised images. It is clear within this group that there are different levels of knowledge about music videos, with some of the children, primarily girls, willing to see a more innocent meaning in the song, and with some feeling that the song had a subtext.

Age 14

There was quite a sharp change in the answers here from the previous focus group and it is clear that any confusion about what the song might mean is gone.

Interviewer - OK so do you know what that is?

Girl 1 - and *Boy 1 -* yes

Interviewer - what is it then?

Boy 1 - basically he is trying to cover up a song by saying can you blow my whistle baby when he actually means can you suck my dick

...

Interviewer - have you seen the music video?

Girl 1 - yeah

Boy 1 - I haven't

Girl 1 - it's like set on a beach and it's him being horrible and stuff it's not really pleasant because if a child likes that song and types it up and the parents are going to think he has influenced them and stuff like that and the parents will hate that artist and not let the children listen to it

Boy 1 - it's based on pornography basically

Girl 1 - yeah

Girl 1 also points out that she feels that younger children would not understand the song's meaning until they watched the music video, an observation that aligns closely with the findings from the younger focus group. Girl 1 describes the male pop artist as disgusting in the music video and doesn't mention the female dances. She is clearly more concerned with the negative heteronormative performance of masculinity and male sex roles within relationships. It is interesting that she has shifted the negative message onto the male artist and does not just condemn the female dances, which can be seen in older aged focus groups. The children in this focus group then went on to note that this type of sexualised video is not uncommon.

Age 15

There seems to be quite a bit of a shift in ideas at this age whereby both the girls and boys know that the message of the song is sexualised and they disagree with the images seen in the music videos, yet there is also an element of acceptance of this, which is a new development at this age.

Interviewer - OK so I am now going to play you a track and I want you to tell me how you feel about it.

Boy 2 - oh man

Interviewer - OK so do we know that song?

Boy 1 - yes it's about a blow job

Boy 2 - ha yeah

Girl 1 - how do you know that Boy 1

Boy 1 - blow my whistle baby let me know!

Girl 1 - yeah maybe he is just singing about a lovely whistle ha

Boy 2 - yeah right

...

Interviewer - how does that make you feel then?

Girl 1 - there's two sides really one like music's not proper anymore and then there's me who can be quite into songs because they're catchy

Girl 2 - yeah

Boy 1 - I'm not going to lie a lot of bands I like do that sort of stuff

Boy 1 states that there are a lot of bands that have such sexualized music videos and arguably therefore shows some acceptance of them. Both the girls agreed that if the song was catchy (and I would suggest popular) then this makes the song more acceptable, whatever the message is. Yet some of the female interviewees were still disconcerted by the message in this song:

Interviewer - and have you seen the music video?

Boy 1 - yes

Boy 2 - urrr yes

Boy 1 - its boobs boobs bum boobs bikini bum boobs!

Interviewer - OK so girls what do you think about that then?

Girl 1 - it's a bit stupid they never have men all hanging out so why should they have women out

Interviewer - what do you think about the music videos girls?

Girl 1 - I just don't think it is very necessary

Girl 2 - I agree but I don't think people see it as wrong 'cause it's always encouraged by the media so people actually really don't care, they see it as good because the media says so that's why in a music video they always have that sort of thing in it.

Girl 1 highlighted that there are certain double standards in the music industry whereby female artists are expected to be attractive and show a lot of skin, which is not necessarily the case for male artists. Girl 2 states that sexualized dancing or images are accepted and furthermore encouraged by the media and because of the extensive exposure of this type of music video, sexualized content has in turn become normalized.

Age 16

The oldest age group also questions the sexualised nature of the music video:

Interviewer - oh so I'm going to start a song and I want you to say what jumps out at you how it makes you feel: what you think of it

Boy 2 - it's got a guitar in it

Girl 1 - it's so artificial!

Girl 2 - it's sexist, do you notice that?

Boy 1 - 'blow your whistle' how is that sexist?

Girl 2 - Coz well... laughs

Boy 1 - OK well maybe a little bit, it's what you make it

A development within this age group, however, was a far louder male voice within the discussion that had been lacking slightly at younger ages.

Interviewer - Have you seen the video?

Boy 1 - yeah, he's surrounded by girls yeah, oh my god I envy that

...

Interviewer - OK is that a good thing?

Boy 1 - it's not bad! Most blokes would like loads of girls like that Girls protests

Boy 1 also makes one of the first comments supporting and even envying the male music artist for his interaction with lots of females. This is a 'laddish' comment which unsurprisingly the girls in the focus group objected to. I turned to the females of the focus group at this point to gain their response to this laddish voice:

Interviewer - what about you girls

Girl 2 - I kind of like this video it makes me feel like an object though

Boy 2 - does it make you feel inferior?

Girl 2 - yes it does!

Interviewer - What do you think of those girls?

Boy 1 - they're not the kind of girl I go for

Interviewer - would you not watch the video without the girls in it?

Boy 1 - yeah it would ruin the song

Girl 2 openly expressed that these types of music videos make her feel inferior and in fact Boy 1 supports Girl 2's argument by saying that the female dancers are not the kind of girl he would go for. This is an interesting change of tune, as Boy 1 originally stated that he would like girls to dance around him in similar fashion to the music video, yet he followed this by saying that he wouldn't date one of these girls. Yet these strong assertions of masculinity within the focus group were also intermixed with a few more insecure statements as below:

Boy 1 - I personally don't watch Flo Rida's videos, but from what I have seen he is always exposing like his big muscular body and there's loads of girls

Boy 1 gives quite a factual account of the video and indirectly makes light of how problematic these videos can be. It is possible these types of images of a strong masculine physique are

inducing an element of body insecurity in young males. Another statement made about the negative performance of masculinity in music videos such as Flo Rida's is seen below:

Interviewer - do you think songs give conflicting messages?

Boy 2 - they're a bit stereotypical really - so they talk about boys like they don't treat girls right

The thought that male music artists are stereotyped as not treating women in a fair way is very damaging to the construction of masculinity and gender roles balances. Yet it seems that Boy 2 has described conflicting messages in songs from a critical stance as he describes them as stereotypical and thus is underlining the negative connotations these stereotypes have on masculinity himself. However Boy 2 is also admitting that popular music does hold negative masculine stereotypes which are being received and decoded by many young people on different levels, some of which may be more critical, as in the case of Boy 2, than others.

CASE STUDY ROUND UP

In the youngest focus group, the children commented on musical aspects of the song; they seemed in some doubt about the song's meaning, but could not explain it. It was also very interesting that at this age the children admitted to stumbling over these videos and searching for them out of curiosity about the song's meaning. (see page 85) By age 14, however, any confusion about the song's meanings had gone, and the most negative comments by females in this group were directed at the male artist and not the sexualized female dancers. This idea is not seen at any other age as the discussion turned to the females in the music video and not Flo Rida himself. It is also true that from age 15 onwards the young males in the groups have far more to say about the music videos and comments are often directed at the dancers in the videos. By the age of 15 both boys and girls in the groups felt that this music video was overtly sexual and that it portrays women in an unfavorable light. Yet the group accepted that this was quite commonplace for music videos and was not that scandalous to them. Moreover they agreed that because the song was very catchy and popular that this somehow outweighed the negative connotations of the song's message. Yet I felt some of the most interesting comments about the music video came from children aged 16, at which point different themes that were not apparent in any other age group showed themselves. First, the females in this group openly voiced that they felt that the music video was sexist, and here for the first time one girl said that this video made her feel like an object and inferior. The girls up to this age had pointed out the sexist remarks but had not said that it had had an impact on them personally. What else is very apparent at this age is a much louder male and laddish voice, which both objectifies women but also divulges some problems concerning the performance of masculinity. (see page 89-90) Clearly at this age the males interviewed are conscious that the type of male-female relations seen in the video are not correct and have some critical thoughts on these types of music videos. However years of viewing these types of music videos could result in these unhealthy messages becoming normalized for young males, meaning unhealthy attitudes could still be forming. Kistler and Lee's (2010) study of male college students opinions of sexualised hip-hop music videos like that of Flo Rida showed that males that had viewed these videos objectified women more and had more reinforced stereotypical gender attitudes than males who watched fewer music videos of this type. It could therefore be said that music videos that are easily accessed and watched regularly in the everyday lives of young people are shaping perceptions of gender and sexual norms in relationships.

CHAPTER ROUND UP

THE LINKING OF CASE STUDIES

This section will combine the findings from both case studies and examine the main themes that arose. I will firstly present the young female and male responses respectively and then I will compare female and male responses and explore youth people's perceptions of love, romance and gender roles in popular music culture.

YOUNG FEMALES RESPONSES

Most love songs directed at young female listeners are based on finding love in an almost Disney-like fashion. As Milestone and Meyer explain, '[g]etting a boyfriend is only the beginning of romance: girls' emotional lives are defined through a series of romantic moments which culminate in marriage proposal and the wedding day'. (2012: 87-8) However as girls grow older they also seem interested in hearing music that empowers women and puts them in a position of power or performing 'optional femininity' or female empowerment. (Charlebois, 2011: 128) Within my study the transition between these two states of femininity was quite apparent. One example that arose was the teen boy band One Direction and their song 'Little Things'. The lyrics are shown below:

I know you've never loved

The crinkles by your eyes

When you smile

You've never loved

Your stomach or your thighs,

The dimples in your back at the bottom of your spine

But I'll love them endlessly

•••

I know you've never loved

The sound of your voice on tape

You never want

To know how much you weigh

You still have to squeeze into your jeans

But you're perfect to me

To show the transition between these two states of femininity, here are some female responses to this song at different ages:

At age 11 the females interviewed certainly regarded this song as romantic and wanted to be associated with the band. One female stated: 'Oh my God, I love One Direction I am their biggest fan, my wall's totally covered with them.' By the age of 13 girls started to see the boys in the band as attractive and boyfriend material: 'Harry's is so good looking, he's my favourite.' Yet most interestingly, by the age of 15 young girls begin to see the negative gender imbalance in relationships described in love songs like this:

'Like One Direction song "Little Things", it annoys me 'cause they're like, it doesn't matter that you're fat and don't fit into your jeans but you shouldn't need to say that, it just seems like a really bad way of putting it in love songs, it's kind of calling your girlfriend fat which isn't very nice. Sometimes there's amazing lyrics about love but the way that song has put it, it's degrading.'

This song raises questions about male dominance in relationships and young females requiring reassurance from them which doesn't represent a loving relationship in the best light. It could also lead to young people feeling worried about not quite measuring up to the beauty standards set in popular music in terms of attracting the opposite sex. As Aubrey and Frisby note, 'one of the most pervasive themes of contemporary media is the theme that an attractive appearance and sexy body are among the most important goals young people, especially women, can achieve'. (2011: 476) The young female responses from both case studies indicated that some of the recurrent sexualized images of women in popular music whether that be female music artists or female extras in music videos sometimes leave little room for any other performance of femininity. These findings were also shown in Aubrey and Frisby's 2011 study of the top 10 songs from billboard music videos. They found that 91.7% of female artists had a small or

average sized waist and that 96.1% of female artists are facially attractive.² So from this data the writers concluded that 'contemporary music videos serve to reinforce the cultural notion that women are valued first and foremost for their bodies and their appearance'. (494) This is not surprising, yet what was interesting is that in male artists music videos, 34.3% contained decorative roles for women in their video and further to this 31.4% of female artists actually used sexually suggestive dance themselves. (488-9) So clearly there are some other pressures on female artists than just to perform pop music. This idea of women in popular music being used for aesthetic value is certainly something that was highlighted in my own research. As noted, one 16-year-old girl stated 'it's a bit stupid they never have men all hanging out so why should they have women out'. Another 16-year-old girl interviewed stated, 'degrading they expect us to look all the same', thereby giving some indication of the direct impact of this representation of women on young girls. Even the youngest 11-year-old females interviewed expressed some sort of concern about women in popular music: one girl thought 'some of her [Beyoncé] videos are a bit inappropriate'. Mako Fitts (2008) raises an interesting point related to these young girls' statements about Beyoncé. Fitts believes that female artists and dancers do to some degree have a choice in the way they are represented on music videos and album covers. By making the choice to wear little clothing or dance in a suggestive way, popular female music artists are in fact performing the objectification of their own bodies and confirming this performance as a positive to young females. However some of the older girls interviewed for my study could be seen to disagree with this type of performance, and in fact thought that so-called 'empowered women' just act and dress in this way to receive more attention (see page 76).

The responses from the youngest females indicate that young girls are listening to pop music and are receiving messages and ideas about gender through performances or images of music artists. However my data also suggests that as girls grow older they become more questioning about how popular music portrays females. They certainly view females in the music industry as attractive but also often as self-objectified. The representation of femininity though female music artists has undoubtedly diversified offering a wider variety of feminine identities, but it would seem a large proportion of popular music displays femininity in a sexualised way, and in turn this allows stereotypes to form and exert a powerful influence over young females. To

² In this study facial attractiveness is coded as follows: '[f]or men, attractiveness was coded as having such features as a strong jaw, a "baby" face, and a broad forehead. For women, attractive features included large eyes, small nose, small chin, full lips, prominent and narrow cheekbones, and a broad smile.' (2011: 485)

analyse female music artists and the responses from young females they elicit more meaningfully, these must be compared with male music artists and young male responses.

YOUNG MALES RESPONSES

It is often easy to forget that young males are constricted by cultural stereotypes and also have to negotiate gender performance. There is little research into how young boys construct teenage masculinity as this phenomenon is often overlooked by work that focuses on girls and women. (Enck-Wanzer, Murray, 2011: 58-9) It would seem that males have a far harder path to steer as it is easy to see how today's society does not offer a particularly stable conception of male identity. (Gauntlett, 2002: 9).³

My research indicates that one of the most important things to note is the very few songs about love or romantic relationships by a male or female artist marketed towards young male listeners. In fact most songs by male artists revolve around sexual relationships as opposed to romantic ones and give rise to a real contrast in responses by young males. There were some misogynistic comments that spanned the whole age range (see pages 71 & 90), yet some older males also had a more critical approach to the negative portrayal of masculinity (see page 91). This is potentially extremely damaging to the way in which young males perceive gender roles in relationships. Further to this, during my study some comments arose that showed young people were often confused and worried about pop artists' personal lives and their relationships as documented in the media. One comment was about the pop star Rihanna and her relationship with singer Chris Brown. It is well documented that this relationship was abusive and resulted in Rihanna going to hospital and Brown doing community service. However after a few months the pair reunited, offering a possibly confusing message to young people. One 13-year-old male commented:

Boy 1 - if you look at a lot of her recent pictures it's like her smoking and stuff... after that Chris Brown thing

Interviewer - OK and how does that make you feel?

Boy 1 - really bad she's not harming me she's harming herself

³ In today's society there are many conflicting performances of masculinity that span a range from perceived effeminacy to versions of hyper masculinity. With more power being passed to females within society, males can be seen to be losing their social usefulness to some extent and according to some theorists this has left men unsure about gender role expectations.

It is not only within popular music that young people refine their own ideas about love but also through the wider celebrity culture that goes alongside popular music culture. And there is often celebrity news that is damaging to the perception of young males within romantic relationships.

Masculinity along with femininity has undergone some changes. According to one theory, in previous generations males had 'social usefulness' (Williams, 2007: 147), but as females have taken over some of this male usefulness in today's society, gender roles have become blurred and this has left the modern man in crisis. Popular music seems to be an industry where men are still dominant and this gives them a platform to assert their masculinity. I do understand Mark McCormack's position in his 2012 book The Declining Significance of Homophobia whereby he suggests that homophobia is becoming less important in the way young boys construct their heterosexual masculinity. In a later article 'Men2.0' he used the example of boy band One Direction as an example of the 'vast number of famous men to embody this softer, more inclusive masculinity'. (2012) While this statement may be true, he later adds that as a consequence of celebrities like One Direction 'toxic behaviors have been replaced with hugging, cuddling, and loving'. My research does not support this statement as the young males in my case studies displayed a very strong sense of heterosexual masculinity. It is also my belief that young boys are probably not watching or listening to boy bands like One Direction. One 12-year-old boy from my study stated: 'girls like things like One Direction, that's based more for girls; they're kinda like what people listen to.' By the age of 15 the male response was actually quite offensive. Boy 1 said: 'they're deluded - they love mainstream, they thrive on mainstream crap - One Direction are horrible I'm sorry.' Therefore even if boy bands are performing a softer version of masculinity, this is not what is being received by young boys: they are opting to listen to different genres of music in which masculinity is often performed in a misogynistic way.

YOUNG PEOPLES RESPONSES

Popular music at times offers unequal gender role performances, which are received by young people on a spectrum of understanding. The main themes that arose from the two case studies are as follows: popular music is certainly informing ideas about 'romantic' relationships,

popular music is reinforcing ideas of what is attractive to the other sex and there are conflicting sex role messages within love songs. Popular music culture today for the reasons outlined must be considered as one important conditioning factor in how young people behave and interact towards the other sex in intimate and romantic situations. My findings suggest that popular music does have a bearing on young people's construction of love and the gender role norms in a loving relationship. However this becomes problematic when some popular music offers an imbalanced, conflicting and confusing version of loving relationships for both young males and females.

CHAPTER FIVE

CRITICAL EVALUATION AND OUTLOOK FOR RESEARCH

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Using data derived primarily from 4 focus groups and supported by 130 questionnaires, this research has aimed to investigate to what extent popular music culture is impacting young people with regards to identity and gender construction as a consequence of their consumption of popular music as a cultural product. The study was presented in standalone chapters dealing with specific themes, but there are some connections and relationships that can be drawn between them. Chapter Two discusses the increased and diverse access to popular music which can be seen to have changed how young people consume music and carry out every day routines. My study explores how iPod culture has become a cultural symbol for young people to show they are involved with popular music and it is accessible to them, such that out of all 130 children that were asked only 7 (5%) did not own their own iPod/musicplaying device. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital could quite easily be applied to the iPod and was very evident theme in the focus groups, with one 16-year-old stating 'no it has to be a new iPod otherwise it looks retarded'. The iPod is also a Wi-Fi enabled device that has allowed easy access and increased consumption of web cultures which house popular music and has certainly given a far larger online voice to young people. Furthermore the cultures that surround popular music, such as pop artist social media sites or music talent shows like the X Factor, have become part of popular music consumption. Music consumption is an under-explored area due to technology evolving so quickly, yet technology has allowed young people to have music at their fingertips on the move and this has become the norm, to the extent whereby the children interviewed felt it was not easy to give music up as it is so ingrained in their everyday routine.

My research suggests that this level of consumption and participation in popular music has impacted on young people's self-identity; as a consequence my study supports the notion that there is a relationship between young people, popular music and friendship group formation as discussed in Chapter Three. This is a very important statement as it shows that popular music is a way that young people negotiate relationships with peers and also allows a structure for them to carry out cultural ordering as described by David Beer, which may nurture friendship groups. Therefore it is easy to understand why the

outward expression of fandom to others is very powerful mechanism and can represent cultural and social capital. Popular music is a large socialising agent of self-identity during the crucial teenage years. Theories on fandom are not a new concept but changes in music consumption, in particular web cultures, have allowed collective identities associated with different genres of popular music much easier to assess. It would appear from my study not only are young people keen to assert their musical preferences though their performance of self but also consider adopting lifestyles choices to join in the collective identity of a musical subgroups. My study suggests that popular music consumption is affecting the construction of young people's self-identity but consumption of this kind also has a bearing on gender identity. Increased access to popular music culture, particularly though web cultures, means that children's music consumption is harder to supervise than in previous generations, with a result that young people are able to access highly sexualized images and music videos. This growing ease in accessing popular music was illustrated in my study, for example by not one child surveyed feeling they did not have easy access to music videos. This becomes problematic when popular music is also in some cases offering unequal gender role performances that can be confusing to young people. My case studies indicated that popular music is aiding in the perception of what young people perceive to be romantic relationships and the gender norms within them. Popular music is also propelling ideas about the need to be attractive to the other sex. As Aubrey and Frisby noted in their 2011 study, beauty and sexiness is perceived as a goal to achieve by many young people, in particular females. (2011: 476) Through the consumption of popular music culture as a cultural commodity, young people's construction and performance of a gendered self-identity, and furthermore perceptions of gender role norms, are being impacted by the inconsistent and confusing messages they are receiving. For example the responses received in the music video case study highlighted the imbalanced representation of gender roles norms in a romantic relationship performed through music. My study also shows that these messages were not just portrayed through one genre of music but can even be seen in seemingly 'innocent' teen pop songs such as One Direction's 'Little Things' (see page 92-4). The representation of gender and gender roles in popular music must be considered as problematic territory when being received by young people who are still refining their own gender identity.

LIMITATIONS

Reflecting on my research, I can see valuable data that shows young people are to some extent being influenced by popular music consumption, yet when interpreting the patterns that arose through my research I can also see limitations and understand that further exploration would be needed to fully validate the proposed reasoning behind why the trend occurred at all.

Questionnaires:

As I carried out my research in both a primary and secondary school I collected data from more 11-year-olds than any other age group due to the over-lap of this age range in both schools. I did not have any control over which children in both schools were given the questionnaire apart from the age range specified and this did lead to uneven data sets for each gendered age group. However what my research did yield was a clear set of patterns that allowed me to see ideas held within the children interviewed, and this was very fruitful. I feel using mainly quantitative data was good for my preliminary research as it allowed me to see a broad and current overview of ideas held by the young people interviewed. This type of research methodology did, however, leave me with room for further questioning which I was able to explore in my qualitative approach.

Focus groups:

The focus groups were used to collect more sensitive and personal data yet as a consequence they did yield a smaller sample size. The main limitation of the focus group was not being able to interview the 11-13-year-olds in individual focus groups; however being forced to interview them together, due to the timetabling of the school, revealed that their opinions were often similar and collectively different from the older aged focus groups. As the focus groups were conducted in School One (Secondary school with Grade 4 inadequate over all Ofsted rating) they are also only representative of the social, cultural, racial and economic demographic shared by young people in that geographic location.

OUTLOOK FOR RESEARCH

I think the most interesting and largest trend that occurred statistically through many of the responses of the children surveyed and that I could also see in the focus group responses is how children aged 11-13 felt popular music was less important to them in their everyday lives and felt less impacted by it. This is very interesting, as before and after this age children felt almost the complete opposite about popular music. This area is of great interest as it challenges preconceived ideas about popular music and young people and needs further research. At such a young developmental stage of one's identity it is of interest to me that these children feel removed from popular music culture, as this is evidently not the case for all other age groups, yet definitive reasons for this pattern have not been found.

¹ The demographic of the school is described by Ofstead as follows: '[m]ost students are White British, with others coming from various minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average, as is the proportion identified by the school with special education needs and/or disabilities. (Ofsted Website; 2011)

Another issue that arose from the qualitative research was an amount of confusion surrounding the performance of ethnicity in popular music culture. One 11-year-old girl shared some reservations about the African American singer Beyoncé, saying 'what I don't like about Beyoncé is that every year she's lighter, she was born black ... it makes me think is she ashamed to be the colour she is.' The interviewee was of a similar ethnicity to Beyoncé and clearly there is some scope from further research here along with the racial tensions between music artists from different ethnicities. A current example of this would by Miley Cyrus's use of twerking in her 2013 VMA performance, which has caused some controversy that touches on racial issues. However I was unable to include ethnicity in this project for the following reasons: firstly, ethnicity was not in my research question plan, consequently I was not able to carry out consistent questioning across all focus groups. My quantitative data had no mention of ethnicity and this theme only became apparent in my qualitative data, so I was unable to employ a mixed methodology. Even if I was just to analyse my focus group data I would not be able to derive concrete evidence for any themes that arose due to the fact that I did not ask every focus group the same ethnicity-based questions, as the comments I received grew organically from other non-ethnicity-related questions. Secondly, the size of this particular thesis would not have permitted another substantial chapter on this issue. However, what I am hoping to highlight here is the need for an in-depth study of ethnicity and popular music.

RESEARCH IMPACT

Popular music culture is constantly evolving and this makes it more challenging for research on it to have impact. I suggest a way in which my research could have social impact would be to use the issues found surrounding popular music culture as the basis for a scheme of learning for Personal, Health, Social and Citizenship Education (PHSCE) lessons found in schools like the ones I carried out my research in. Current popular music culture could be used as a subject, as it offers lots of opportunities to discuss a variety of problematic issues for young people. These types of lessons could also allow a safe environment for young people to talk about aspects of popular music which may seem confusing to them and could offer them information and understanding which they could use to make informed decision about popular music's varying messages.

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² A dance craze started in New Orleans and associated with young black people, whereby a female dancer will move her hips in order for the lower fleshy extremities to gyrate against a male dancer to cause sexual arousal in the male.

³ Black communities felt Cyrus (a white artist) made a mockery of the dance, which has long been a custom in black heritage. Tensions were also felt as only black backing dancers were used, furthermore Cyrus slapped the dancers' derrieres during the performance, which was seen as derogatory by people of black cultures.

I feel one of the most interesting themes that arose in my research in terms of social impact is the realisation that the young people interviewed showed that they are not ignorant to the problems they face in popular music consumption. In each chapter there were examples of quite critical and insightful responses to questioning, particularly in older children. It would appear from my study that although young people may be confused about the material they are exposed to, they can certainly see the potential dangers surrounding their consumption, to an extent. The younger children did not appear to receive popular music in such a critical way, but clearly learn to question some of its conflicting messages as they grow older. Yet I question how impressionable very young people are when receiving popular music's messages, and whether or not they have the agency to resist them. As consumption of popular music is becoming more accessible and socially acceptable for children at a far younger age, I query whether in these early years before adolescence children are exposed to popular music which they do not have the agency to resist, and therefore whether popular music is in some way are ingraining ideas subconsciously. It seems positive however that as young people grow into their teenage years they start to become critical of popular music messages and could articulate problematic issues such as unrealistic versions of beauty or imbalanced gender roles. It therefore seems significant that young people are not blind to the problems that face them in the messages they receive from popular music but in many cases still actively choose to partake in a large volume of popular music consumption. For a possible explanation here I return to the idea of collective identity, as even though older children are critical of the material they consume they still what to actively be seen to be involved in the culture of contemporary music. It seems that this is where potential problems lie, as so much cultural capital is bound up in the popular music scene. It is therefore understandable why it is so difficult to totally resist popular music altogether. Even with a critical eye young people are still listening, watching and interacting with popular music that is problematic on all the grounds explored above.

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