

# *Musical Behavior of Young Hong Kong Students*

Wai-chung Ho

*Department of Music and Fine Arts  
Hong Kong Baptist University*

*This paper investigates the musical behavior of young Hong Kong students in terms of their musical influences, their habits of singing and listening, and their musical preferences. Data from a sample of 647 Hong Kong Chinese junior secondary school students supports the hypothesis that the most important determinants on young people's musical tastes and behavior are they themselves, their peers and the mass media. 557 students chose CDs as their favorite media for listening, followed by 478 for television and 425 for radio. Although students loved listening to music at home, they did not like to sing there. Outside the school environment, 293 and 160 said that home karaoke and public karaoke were their preferred musical activities. Cantonese pop was the most well-liked style and Chinese classical vocal music was the least welcomed. These findings demonstrate a challenge to music educators to broaden young people's musical tastes to include more different styles of music that might not be typically favored by youth culture. The development of such an openness must be a goal of school music education.*

---

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Wai-chung Ho, Department of Music and Fine Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University, 224 Waterloo Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon. E-mail: [tediwch@hkbu.edu.hk](mailto:tediwch@hkbu.edu.hk)

*Key words: musical behavior; musical taste; musical preference; musical habit; musical learning; Hong Kong*

## **Introduction**

Research on musical behavior has focused on different aspects such as: early childhood musical behavior (e.g., Dowling, 1984; Moog, 1976; Welch, 1986, 1998); musical learning (e.g., Gilbert, 1980; Rainbow, 1977; Smith, 1963); auditory responses to notation (e.g., Sloboda, 1985); musical preference, which has been one of the most frequently studied topics of musical behavior for decades (e.g., Gregory, 1994; LeBlanc, Colman, McCrary, Sherril, & Malin, 1988; LeBlanc, Sims, Siivola, & Obert, 1996; Madsen, Duke, & Geringer, 1986; Schmidt & Zdzinski, 1993; Sims, 1987; Wapnick, 1976, 1980).

As early as the 1950s, Farnsworth (1954) criticized earlier researchers for over-stressing the importance of the biological and physical bases of musical behavior, and ignoring cultural contexts. More recently, psychologists and social scientists have generally tended to study behavior and cognition in its social context. Hargreaves and North (1999) consider music to be important for the management of self-identity, the construction of relationships and management of moods. Sociological and/or socio-psychological factors are widely regarded as important in shaping musical habits and attitudes, especially those of the young (e.g., Boyle, Hosterman, & Ramsey, 1981; Faith & Heath, 1974; Finnas, 1989; Firth, 1983; Johnston & Katz, 1957; Russell, 1997; Welch, 2000; Zdzinski, 1996). Finnas (1989) suggests that peers and disc jockeys have a greater effect on students' musical preferences than do teachers and other adults, and similarly family and educational influences are likely to be quite weak in influencing young people's musical tastes, since they tend to listen to music alone or with peers (Christenson & DeBenedittis, 1986; Larson & Kubey, 1983). School influences tend to be minimal, as is suggested by the generally scant success of formal education to shift adolescent tastes towards classical, and away from

popular music (studies reviewed by Finnas, 1989). Green (2001a) suggests that music teachers should increase their understanding of the connections between music and society in order to better understand their students' perspectives (also see Green, 1999, 2001b). Nevertheless, studies of the inter-relations between these various determinants, both within and beyond the classroom, are rare, particularly with reference to the non-English speaking world.

Only a few studies have been conducted on young students' preferences for the various musical styles taught in Hong Kong schools. Morrison and Yeh (1999) state that a significant difference is found amongst college music majors' responses to three different musical traditions — jazz, Western classical, and Chinese classical music ( $n = 185$ ) and nonmajors ( $n = 194$ ) in the United States, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. In their study, subjects from the U.S. give the highest ratings to jazz, followed by Western classical and Chinese classical; the highest ratings among subjects from China were given to Chinese classical excerpts, followed by Western classical and jazz; whilst Hong Kong subjects demonstrated only a slightly higher rating for Western classical than either Chinese classical or jazz (Morrison & Yeh, 1999). Morrison and Yeh (1999) attribute college students' musical preferences to their cultural environment. Fung, Lee, & Chung (1999/2000) is the only study of grade level and gender as determinants on young Hong Kong students' musical preferences. They used a questionnaire accompanied by 30 listening excerpts, designed after Leblanc et al. (1996), to assess preferences for the following styles: Western classical music, jazz, rock, Cantonese pop, and *Jiangnan Sizhu* (traditional Chinese ensemble music for strings and wind instruments with a light touch of percussion). Cantonese pop proved the most popular, followed by Western styles (in the order of classical, rock, then jazz), and *Jiangnan Sizhu* the least popular style. Although most Hong Kong students prefer Cantonese pop, the school curriculum focuses on the learning of Western classical music (see Curriculum Development Committee, 1983, 1987 and music textbooks for primary and secondary schools, e.g., Chen,

Li, Chen, Mo, & Lu, 1994; Editorial Board, Hong Kong Music Publishers, 2000, 2001; Lam & Ip, 1997, 1998, 1999; Ma, Wong, & Lok, 2002; Ou, Zheng, & Xiong, 1997; Wu, 1991, 1997, 1998; Yuen, 1991; Yuen & Chen, 1998; Yung, 1997, 1998). Ho and Fung (2001) found that Hong Kong music teachers in schools present mainly Western classical music and Western folk songs, with a responding means of 4.19 and 3.54 respectively (when 1 is "not at all" and 5 is "very much"). In Ho's and Fung's questionnaire-survey (2001), 39.4% of the teachers agree that they use Western classical music extensively (the highest rating on the five-point scale) in the curriculum, but no one thought it very important to include Chinese traditional music (also see Curriculum Development Institute, 1998a, 1998b). Neither Fung et al.'s 1999/2000 nor Ho's and Fung's 2001 study are concerned with links between socio-cultural structure and musical taste, or with relationships between students' musical behavior within and outside school. This paper explores the musical behavior of Hong Kong junior secondary school students in terms of their listening habits, musical influences, musical preferences, and attitudes towards popular music in school music lessons.

## **The Study**

Hong Kong was a British colony from 1842 to 1997, and its education was designed to support colonialism: English was the primary language, and its artistic ideals were based on those of Western high culture. Though Hong Kong owes its cultural ascendancy to the West, there has been a search for identity with traditional Chinese culture since the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration (the formalization of the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to the Chinese Mainland in July 1997). Since the return of its sovereignty to the Chinese Mainland, Putonghua (the official language of The Chinese Mainland) has become compulsory in Hong Kong schools. But Form VI (i.e., Grade 12) students still give more preference to English over Putonghua and it seems clear to the spread of Putonghua in Hong Kong lacks a social and physiological support (Lu & Au-Yeung, 2000). Traditional Chinese music

has also been promoted in school music education since the 1980s, though once again recent researches show that it is the least preferred style with students (Ho, 1999; Fung et al., 1999/2000; Ho & Fung, 2001).

Western popular songs dominated the Hong Kong music business in the 1970s, but began to fade during the 1980s with the demise of disco. Changes of popular taste also affected the popularity of Cantonese, and Cantonese songs (Liu, 1984). Liu (1984) suggested that the shift of taste from Western to Cantonese popular songs in the early 1980s was due to “different generations and societal atmospheres”, which changed Hong Kong’s relations with the West generally (p. 39, translated by the writer). Chan (1994) suggests that popular culture has been the “key dynamic agent in embodying as well as shaping the social, cultural, and political mentality of Hong Kong,” and “the primary sphere of consciousnesses and sentiment where the concerns, anxieties, and forbidding of society as a whole find their expression” (p. 449). Hong Kong students have been enthusiastic about pop music for a long time. As early as 1987, the Hong Kong Catholic Social Communication Commission conducted a survey on 2,010 secondary school students (Grade 9–11), and discovered that 42.9% of all the idols named by school children were singers (So & Chan, 1992, p. 76). In 1999 a comparative study was conducted on Hong Kong’s and Nanjing’s (a major city located in the Chinese Mainland) university and secondary students’ attitudes towards their idols, which showed that that Hong Kong’s students adore popular artists including singers, whilst Nanjing’s students admire Bill Gates, the Chairperson of the American computer software company, and politicians such as Chairman Mao (Ming Pao Daily News, 1999). The recent survey conducted by the Department of Applied Social Studies of the City University of Hong Kong demonstrated that Hong Kong’s secondary school students (aged between 13 and 17) idolize Cantonese pop stars such as Kelly Chan Wai-lam and Joey Yung Cho-yee, whilst mainland students look up to former premier Zhou Enlai, the owner of Microsoft Bill Gates, and Chairman Mao (So, 2002).

Musical behavior is understood here as a set of choices concerning which

musical instruments to learn, which types of concert to attend, the preferred media and environments for listening to music, the preferred places to sing, and the sources of musical knowledge. I use “musical behavior” as a general term, rather than in any technical, psychological, physiological or neurological sense. Since links between musical behavior in and out of school manifest themselves in various ways and at various levels within a complex interactive system in which the classroom plays a relatively small part, I asked the students for their opinions about music in both realms. This paper intends to focus on those social forces which guide students’ perceptions of music both in and out of school: the education system, the family, the peer group, whose members share similar circumstances, habits, and values and are often of a similar age; and the mass media.

### *Subjects*

The questionnaire survey was administered in June 1999 to 647 Hong Kong junior secondary school students aged between 12–16, who were in their seventh and ninth year of their nine-year compulsory schooling. The rationale for choosing this target group is that all the students had experienced at least six years of music education in their primary studies. It was assumed that the subjects were familiar with some Western and Chinese music (see Curriculum Development Committee, 1983, 1987, and music textbooks for primary and secondary schools). Though Western and Chinese popular music are rarely taught, students are accustomed to them outside school. Six secondary school music teachers volunteered to find subjects for the survey from a group of schools that admitted the best as well as the worst academically performing students. The uneven distribution of gender in the sample — 431 female (67.9%) and 204 male (32.1%) — was a result of the participants coming from four co-educational and two girls schools. One is a government school with no religious background, and the other five are government-aided schools, one with a Buddhist background, one Protestant, one Catholic and the other three with none.

### *Instruments*

The data was collected from a questionnaire-survey in Chinese. The subjects were not provided with any listening examples, but only with familiar style-labels. The musical styles and the instruments involved are supposed to have been taught in their school music lessons (see Curriculum Development Committee, 1983, 1987, and music textbooks for primary and secondary schools). Subjects were requested to respond to options concerning: (1) their musical backgrounds; (2) their general musical habits; (3) their musical influences; (4) their musical preferences outside school (from 1= “greatly enjoy”, to 5= “strongly dislike”); (5) the musical genres that they like or would like to sing in school music lessons; and (6) the extent to which they liked to learn about popular music (from 1= “very much”, to 5= “not at all”), and their reasons for having popular music in school. The data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Missing or invalid responses were discounted in the calculation.

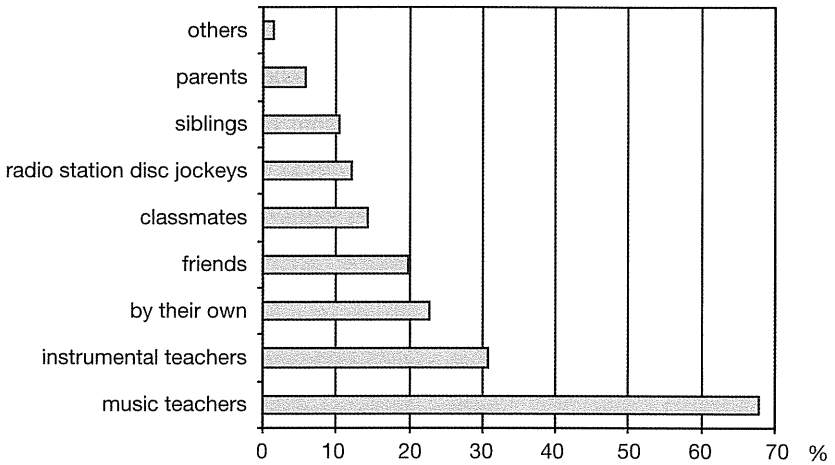
## **Results**

### *Musical learning and influences*

Students were allowed more than one response to questions concerning their musical learning and influences. 67.9% (439 students) stated that they learned their musical knowledge from their music teachers in school, whilst 30.8% (199 students) learned it from their instrumental teachers. 22.7% (147 students) thought that they learned music by themselves, 19.9% (129 students) said that it was from their friends, 14.2% (92 students) from their classmates, 12% (78 students) from radio station disc jockeys, 10.4% (67 students) from siblings, 5.7% (37 students) from parents, and 1.5% (10 students) from others (see Figure 1).

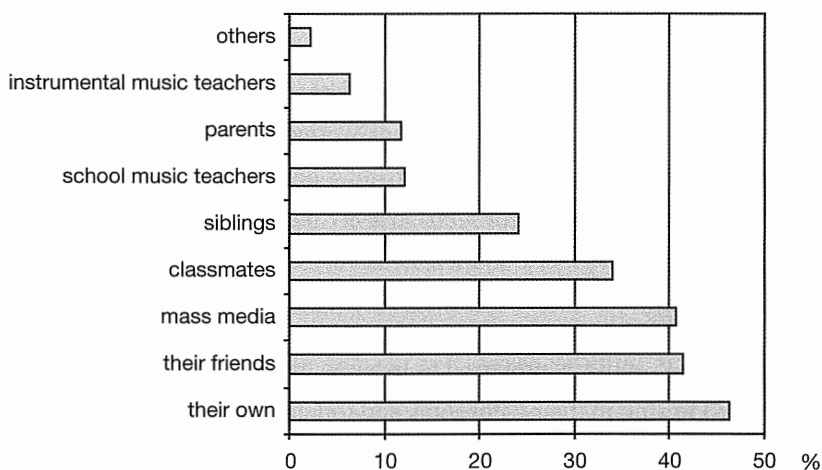
Though most subjects agreed that their musical knowledge was obtained from their music teachers and/or instrumental teachers, 32.9% (213 students) thought that the mass media in the form of newspapers,

**Figure 1 Percentage of persons from whom students learn their musical knowledge**



magazines and music critics were the greatest influence. 30.8% (199 students) said their musical knowledge was gained through extra-curricular activities such as school choir, music club, school band, etc., and 11.6% (75 students) said their knowledge was obtained through activities conducted outside school such as choirs and orchestras. Only 5.9% (38 students) maintained that they received their knowledge through participating in school music activities, primary school choir, fan club run by popular artists, etc. Nevertheless, most students believed that their music teachers did not cultivate their musical tastes: 46.2% (428 students) said they had developed their own; 41.4% (268 students) said they were influenced by their friends; 40.6% (263 students) by the mass media; 34% (220 students) by classmates; 24% (155 students) by siblings; 12.2% (79 students) by school music teachers; 11.7% (76 students) by parents; 6.3% (41 students) by instrumental teachers; 2.2% (14 students) by other people such as relatives, popular singers, etc. (see Figure 2). The data shows that the musical tastes of the young developed mainly through peer contact and exposure to the mass media, both of which tended to alienate them from their music teachers, instrumental teachers and parents.



**Figure 2** Percentage of persons who influence students' musical taste

However, the correlation between the persons who influenced students' musical tastes and the persons from whom students learned their musical knowledge show significant coefficients: (a) between parents and parents ( $r = .404, p < .01$ ); (b) between siblings and siblings ( $r = .420, p < .01$ ); (c) between schoolmates and friends ( $r = .296, p < .01$ ); (d) between schoolmates and schoolmates ( $r = .370, p < .01$ ). Those who influenced students' musical tastes and transmitted musical knowledge significantly correlate with friends, siblings, parents and schoolmates, but not with the self, school music teachers, instrument music teachers, and disc jockeys ( $p > .05$ ).

### *Learning musical instruments*

The number of students who learned musical instruments in school was slightly higher than those who learnt outside school. 271 out of 635 students studied their instruments in lessons provided by the school authority. More students learnt Western than Chinese musical instruments, both in and outside school, with 179 playing the recorder and 33 the violin in school. Among the Chinese instruments studied in school, *zheng* and *dizi* were the most selected by 28 and 12 students respectively. Other Chinese

instruments such as *zhonghu*, *dihu*, *gehu*, *gaihu*, *banhu*, *saxian* are less popular, with only one subject studying each. 212 out of 628 students had learned their instruments outside school, the piano being the most popular (139 students), followed by 67 learning the recorder and 15 the violin. The subjects in this study did not learn other Western instruments. Only 16 students learnt a Chinese instrument outside school (4 for *zheng*, 4 for *dizi*, 3 for *xiao*, 3 for *erhu*, and 2 for *pipa*), but no one was learning any other.

### *Musical habits*

610 of the 635 subjects preferred to listen to music at home, including 182 who liked to sing in their bathrooms and toilets. A further 159 named their favorite listening place as school, 142 preferred to listen in their friends' homes, 126 in concert halls, 109 in other public music venues such as karaoke and disco, and 19 students preferred record shops, youth music centers and shopping malls. 577 students chose CDs as their favorite media for listening, followed by television (478), radio (425), VCD (335), the Internet (140), DVD (67), records (21) and MD (mini-disc) (20).

Although most subjects preferred to listen to music at home, most preferred to sing in public places. 399 students said that they sang most during school music lessons, 293 during home karaoke sessions, 160 in public karaoke, 95 in school choirs, 38 in restaurants, 29 in choirs outside school, and 51 in others places such as taking buses, shopping, friend's homes, bars, discos or other unspecified areas.

Students in the survey were not keen to attend concerts either in or outside school. 277 out of 621 (44.6%) attended school concerts in the 1998–99 academic year, including four who went to more than 12 (0.6%), one who went to between seven and nine (0.2%), 21 between four and six (3.2%), and 251 (38.7%) between one and three. 344 students (53%) did not attend any concerts during the 1998–99 academic year. Chinese classical music concerts, Western classical concerts and Western popular concerts were the three most popular types: 94 (14.5%) went to Chinese classical

concerts; 89 (13.8%) to Western classical concerts; 50 (17.7%) to Western popular concerts; 27 (4.2%) went to other musical events such as choral and Buddhist music concerts. Despite the fact that Chinese classical music concerts were most welcomed inside school, Western classical music was the most popular repertoire outside. Whilst concerts of Chinese popular music were the second most attended, Chinese classical music concerts were not popular. 118 (18.2%) went to Western classical concerts, 97 (15%) to Chinese pop concerts, and 63 (9.7%) to Western pop, and 49 (7.6%) to Chinese classical concerts. Six students (0.9%) went to hear other types of music such as Christian music and jazz.

### *Music listening preferences*

Students were asked to rank their liking for ten kinds of music that they listened to outside school. Musical styles included Western classical instrumental music, Western classical vocal music, Chinese classical instrumental music, Chinese classical vocal music, Chinese folk songs, Putonghua or Mandarin popular songs, Cantonese popular songs, Western popular songs, Japanese popular songs and other world musics, such as Indian, African and Middle Eastern. This question utilized a five-point preference scale for each type of music (from 1 = "like very much" to 5 = "dislike very much").

There was no big difference in preferences between listening to classical or popular music, but subjects tended to prefer popular styles, and the responding means of Cantonese pop, Western pop, Japanese pop and Mandarin pop were 2.003, 2.044, 2.167 and 2.354 respectively (from 1 = "greatly enjoy" to 5 = "strongly dislike"). The responding means for Western classical instrumental music, Western classical vocal music, Chinese classical instrumental music, and Chinese folk songs were 2.519, 2.893, 2.922, and 3.086 respectively, with 3.153 for world music. Compared with the classical, pop and folk music categories, Chinese classical vocal music was the least preferred with a responding mean of 3.646 (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Preferences on 10 Musical Styles**

Rank	Music styles	<i>M</i> *	<i>SD</i>
1	Cantonese popular songs	2.003	0.8902
2	Western popular songs	2.044	0.7999
3	Japanese popular songs	2.167	0.9852
4	Mandarin popular songs	2.354	0.9167
5	Western classical instrumental music	2.519	0.8040
6	Western classical vocal music	2.893	0.8582
7	Chinese classical instrumental music	2.922	0.8926
8	Chinese folk songs	3.086	0.9605
9	Other world musics	3.153	0.8432
10	Chinese classical vocal music	3.646	0.9478

\*1= very like, 3 = no comment, 5 = very dislike

### *Interest in musical styles taught in school music lessons*

A five-point scale (from 1= "very interesting", to 5= "very boring") was adopted to analyze students' evaluations of songs used in schools. 18 (2.8%) and 237 (36.5%) students believed that the songs taught in music lessons were very interesting and interesting, respectively. 268 (41.3%) said "no comment". 62 (9.6%) and 23 (3.5%) found the songs boring and very boring, respectively. The students were also asked to rank their preference for singing the following nine styles in school music lessons: Western art songs, Western folk songs, Chinese folk songs, Western pop, Cantonese pop, Mandarin pop, rock'n'roll, jazz, and Western country music. Among 602 valid cases, 309 students preferred singing Cantonese pop, followed by 278 for Western pop, and 218 for Mandarin pop. Students were slightly more interested in singing Western folk songs (116), rather than Chinese folk songs (103); 170 preferred singing rock'n'roll, 98 jazz and 69 Western country music. The results of a correlation analysis of students' ratings for each musical genre sung in school music lessons show significant coefficients: (a) between Western folk songs and Chinese folk songs ( $r = .382, p < .01$ ); (b) between Cantonese popular songs and Mandarin popular songs ( $r = .389, p < .01$ ); (c) between Western folk songs and Western classical songs ( $r = .380, p < .01$ ); (d) between Chinese folk songs and Western classical songs ( $r = .335, p < .01$ ). These findings indicate that

students in the survey did not discriminate between singing classical, folk or popular genres.

The respondents were asked to what extent they liked to learn popular music in school. A five-level tier of agreement (1 = "very much like"; 2 = "like"; 3 = "no comment"; 4 = "dislike"; 5 = "very much dislike") was given. Most respondents either had interest in, or had no comment on learning pop music in school. 144 (23.3%) and 246 (39.9%) were keen to study pop music, while 175 (28.4%) had no comment. 41 (6.6%) and 11 (1.8%) students chose the options of "dislike" and "dislike very much" respectively.

In summary, some clear patterns emerge concerning the musical behavior of Hong Kong junior secondary school students ( $n = 647$ ). Although they agreed about having learnt their musical knowledge from their music teachers, they believed that they themselves, their peer groups and the mass media shaped their musical tastes. Learning Chinese musical instruments was not found to be common in the survey, however, the frequency that students attended Chinese classical music concerts in schools was slightly higher than that for attending Western classical music concerts, while the converse was true outside school. Students' homes were the most popular listening places, and CD and television were the most common media for listening. Although students loved listening to music at home, they did not like to sing there. Students showed an impressive openness towards various musical styles, and said that they listened to similar amounts of popular and classical music.

## **Discussion**

The results suggest that students believe they determine their own musical taste along with peer groups and the mass media, and that most of them did not think that their music teachers played any part. As mentioned earlier, only 79 subjects claimed that teachers had influenced their musical taste, and only 76 acknowledged any parental influence. Nonetheless 268 declared that friends were their core influence, whilst 263 stated the mass media and

220 said classmates. Despite the fact that 439 and 199 students maintained that their musical knowledge was learnt from their music teachers and instrumental teachers respectively, they all asserted that their musical tastes were developed through peer interaction and acquaintance with the mass media. The distinctive *popular* musical tastes of the student sample were sufficiently shared, and defined in opposition to the *classical* musical tastes of their music teachers and parents, to give an alternative student musical culture amongst friends and classmates. The findings of this study indicate that Cantonese pop is the most preferred style among students. The promotion of popular singers by the music industry involves the dramatization of the relations between fans and idols through the reproduction of idols' images as posters and badges, which are distributed through fan clubs and at concerts. The adoration of local popular singers has become a part of youth culture in Hong Kong. Disc jockeys and music critics also play a significant role in influencing students' "private" musical preferences. Cantonese pop, Mandarin, Western and Japanese pop were the most-played styles on radio and television at the time of the survey, and the contemporary predominance of Cantonese pop was clearly registered by the students' preferences. Teachers may face considerable difficulties when trying to introduce students to musical styles that lie outside the consensus of contemporary youth culture, and which they are unlikely to encounter outside the classroom. Popular music is not only practiced for purposes of expression and consumption, but also for the articulation of cultural identity, and Cantonese popular music contributes to a Hong Kong student identity. Chan (1994) has also recognized how this socio-cultural arena shapes the deeper dynamics of Hong Kong popular culture. Such musical peer cultures develop a dynamic of their own, which can demand conformity at the cost of alienation from teachers and parents. This "cultural clash" supports the findings of Finnas (1989) and Green (1999, 2001a, 2001b).

Students' exposure to the various modes of mass media such as radio, television, and more recently, CD, VCD, DVD and the Internet, has grown in both width and depth in students' daily lives, and has an enormous influ-

ence on their musical behavior. The Hong Kong Government's "non-intervention" policy towards economic development allows the development of local culture (including Cantonese pop), while popular culture takes the form of consumption, or more specifically, of a culture of consumption. Many students in the survey consumed television, radio, and magazine literature that correlated with their values and social perceptions; 577 students picked CDs as their favorite listening media, 478 television, 425 radio and 335 DVDs. Home and public karaoke are students' preferred ways of singing. 63.2% of the students said that they would like to learn about popular music in school, whilst 28.4% had no comment to make on the issue.

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, there was no big difference in preferences for listening to classical or popular music; the respective mean scores for Cantonese pop, Western pop, Japanese pop, Mandarin pop, Western instrumental music, Western vocal music, Chinese instrumental music and Chinese folk songs being 2.003, 2.044, 2.167, 2.354, 2.519, 2.893, 2.922 and 3.086 (from 1 = "like very much" to 5 = "dislike very much"). These findings also indicate that students in the survey listened to a variety of musical styles including popular, folk and classical music from both Western and non-Western traditions. The students' neutrality towards Chinese folk songs ( $M = 3.086$ ) and Chinese classical vocal music ( $M = 3.646$ ) may be the result of their lack of exposure to these styles whether within or without the school environment. Students' openness towards both popular and classical music may encourage music teachers to develop stylistically diverse teaching materials.

In terms of instrumental playing, Western instruments were comparatively popular both in and outside school. The most welcomed western instruments played in and outside school were the recorder (taken by 179 students) and the piano (taken by 139 students). The popularity of the recorder is because most students are required to play it by the music curriculum. Students' lack of interest in learning Chinese musical instruments might be due to Hong Kong's historical lack of support for Chinese music, which is part of the cultural legacy of most Hong Kong music teachers,

who are not confident with these styles, compared with those of Western classical music. Consequently, although both Western and Chinese classical music are suggested in the syllabi, the musical value of Chinese classical music has not been as highly regarded as that of Western classical music in formal teaching practices (Ho, 1999; Ho & Fung, 2001; Fung et al., 1999/2000). However, the fact that more students are attending Chinese classical concerts in school might suggest an expansion of interest since the 1997 handover of Hong Kong. Though students in the survey were keen to learn and sing Cantonese pop, they did not go to Chinese music concerts very often, which could be explained by the fact that the school authority, and other institutions such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Music Office usually presented classical concerts of mainly Western music with concessionary rates for students. Popular music concerts are comparatively more expensive, since commercially driven, and they offer no concessions to students.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study emphasize the need for a broader research perspective concerning modifying pupils' musical behavior, since not only the school, but also peers, family and the mass media exert pressure on young people's preferences. This broader perspective should include the effects of group pressure; the social functions served by holding particular musical preferences; and consideration of music teachers' attitudes towards musical style preference. The power of teachers to influence pupils' preferences could be increased if teachers were able and willing to share, or at least show some interest in, their students' preferences. Hundreds of musical events are presented every year by local and overseas musicians ranging from Broadway musicals to traditional Peking operas, from classical to jazz concerts, from African drumming to Javanese Gamelan. If the music curriculum is to reflect such diversity, it needs to include classical, folk and popular music from all over the world. Musical styles taught in school are confined to the



traditional musical learning of Western and Chinese music and its discursive construction. On the other hand, the challenge for Hong Kong music educators is the need to broaden youths' musical tastes beyond those styles that are promoted by the contemporary mass media, such as Chinese classical vocal music, world musics and rock'n'roll.

With an increased understanding of the social processes involved in music in the wider society as well as in school, we can understand more about why students relate to one particular musical behavior and how they respond to music in the classroom. There are also important implications here for music teachers when considering their readiness to teach different musical styles from both Western and non-Western traditions, particularly with respect to those with which they and/or their students are unfamiliar.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Editor, Dr. David W. Chan, and the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable and insightful comments on my manuscript.

## **References**

- Boyle, J. D., Hosterman, G. L., & Ramsey, D. S. (1981). Factors influencing pop music preferences of young people. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 29, 47–55.
- Chan, H. M. (1994). Culture and identity. In D. H. McMillen (Ed.), *The other Hong Kong report 1994* (pp. 443–468). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Chen, Y. H., Li, J. Q., Chen, J. H., Mo, R. L., & Lu, G. Z. (1994). *Xin xiao-xue yinyue do-re-mi* [New primary music do-re-mi] (Books 1–12). Hong Kong: Ying Li Music.
- Christenson, P. G., & Debeneditis, P. (1986). Evesdropping on the FM band: Children's use of radio. *Journal of Communication*, 36, 27–38.
- Curriculum Development Committee. (1983). *Music syllabuses for secondary schools (Forms 1–3)*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

- Curriculum Development Committee. (1987). *Music syllabuses for primary schools*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Curriculum Development Institute. (1998a). *Survey report on Hong Kong music syllabus for primary schools*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Curriculum Development Institute. (1998b). *Survey report on Hong Kong music syllabus for junior secondary schools*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Dowling, W. J. (1984). Development of musical schemata in children's spontaneous singing. In W. R. Crozier & A. J. Chapman (Eds.), *Cognitive processes in the perception of art* (pp. 145–163). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Editorial Board, Hong Kong Music Publishers. (2000). *Integrated music* (Book 1) (6th ed.). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Music Publishers.
- Editorial Board, Hong Kong Music Publishers. (2001). *Integrated music* (Books 2 & 3) (6th ed.). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Music Publishers.
- Faith, A., & Heath, C. L. (1974). Group influence, mass media and musical taste among Canadian students. *Journalism Quarterly*, 51, 705–709.
- Farnsworth, P. R. (1954). *The social psychology of music*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.
- Finnas, L. (1989). How can musical preferences be modified? *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 102, 1–58.
- Firth, S. (1983). *Sound effects: Youth, leisure, and the politics of rock*. London: Constable.
- Fung, C. V., Lee, M., & Chung, S. W. (1999/2000). Music style preferences of young students in Hong Kong. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 143, 50–64.
- Gilbert, J. P. (1980). An assessment of motor skill development in young children. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 28, 167–175.
- Green, L. (1999). Research in the sociology of music education: Some introductory concepts. *Music Education Research*, 1(2), 159–169.
- Green, L. (2001a). Music in society and education. In C. Philpott & C. Plummeridge (Eds.), *Issues in music teaching* (pp. 47–60). London; New York: Routledge.
- Green, L. (2001b). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press.
- Gregory, D. (1994). Analysis of listening preferences of high school and college musicians. *Journal Research of Music Education*, 42, 331–342.
- Hargreaves, D. J., & North, A. C. (1999). Music and adolescent identity. *Music*

*Education Research*, 1(1), 75–92.

- Ho, W. C. (1999). The socio-political transformations and Hong Kong secondary music education: Politicization, culturalization and marketization. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 140, 41–56.
- Ho, W. C., & Fung, C.V. (2001). Music education, political change and cultural transmission in Singapore. In Y. Minami & M. Shinzanoh (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Third Asia-Pacific Symposium in Music Education Research & International Symposium on "Uragoe" and Gender* (Volume 1, pp. 9–14). Nagoya, Japan: Aichi University of Education.
- Johnstone, J., & Katz, E. (1957). Youth and popular music: A study of the sociology of musical taste. *American Journal of Sociology*, 62, 563–568.
- Lam, T. C., & Ip, S. C. (1997). *The rhythm of music* (Book 1) (3rd ed.). Hong Kong: Pilot Publishing.
- Lam, T. C., & Ip, S. C. (1998). *The rhythm of music* (Book 2) (3rd ed.). Hong Kong: Pilot Publishing.
- Lam, T. C., & Ip, S. C. (1999). *The rhythm of music* (Book 3) (3rd ed.). Hong Kong: Pilot Publishing.
- Larson, R., & Kubey, R. (1983). Television and music: Contrasting media in adolescent life. *Youth and Society*, 15, 13–31.
- LeBlanc, A. Colman, J., McCrary, J., Sherril, C., & Malin, S. (1988). Tempo preferences of different age music listeners. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 34, 101–110.
- LeBlanc, A., Sims, W. L., Siivola, C., & Obert, M. (1996). Music style preferences of different age listeners. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 44(1), 49–59.
- Liu, Y. T. (1984). Can the American-British popular music become a strong force? [Yingme xinyin chaohui yaohan xianggong ma?] *The Seventies*, 170, 38–40.
- Lu, D., & Au-Yeung, Y. Y. (2000). Putonghua: A mirror to reflect Hong Kong youths' emotions. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 10(1), 115–133.
- Ma, K. H., Wong, T. O., & Lok, Y. H. (2002). *Journey of music* (Vols. 1 & 2). Hong Kong: Excellence Publications.
- Madsen, C., Duke, R. A., & Geringer, J. M. (1986). The effect of speed alterations on tempo note selection. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 34, 101–110.
- Ming Pao Daily News. (1999, June 7). A warning: Survey findings of popular idols

- (In Chinese), p. A3.
- Moog, H. (1976). The development of musical experience in children of preschool age. *Psychology of Music*, 4, 38–45.
- Morrison, S. T., & Yeh, C. S. (1999). Preference responses and use of written descriptors among music and nonmusic majors in the United State, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 47(1), 5–17.
- Ou, P. X., Zheng, J. W., & Xiong, M. D. (1997). *Xiao-xue yin-yue tian-die* [Music world for primary schools] (Books 1–12). Hong Kong: Xiang-xing Educational Publisher.
- Rainbow, E. L. (1977). A longitudinal investigation of the rhythmic ability of preschool age children. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 50, 55–61.
- Russell, P. A. (1997). Musical tastes and society. In D. J. Hargreaves & A. C. North (Eds.), *The social psychology of music* (pp. 141–158). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmidt, C. P., & Zdzinski, S. F. (1993). Cited quantitative research articles in music education research journals, 1975–1990: A content analysis of selected studies. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 41(1), 5–18.
- Sims, W. (1987). Effect of tempo on music preference of preschool through fourth grade children. In C. Madsen & C. Prickett (Eds.), *Applications of research in music behavior* (pp. 15–25). Tualoosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Sloboda, J. (1985). *The musical mind: the cognitive psychology of music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smith, R. B. (1963). The effect of group vocal training on the singing ability of nursery school children. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 12, 212–226.
- So, A. (2002, March 22). Hong Kong teens adore Kelly, but Zhou still reigns on mainland. *South China Morning Post*, p. 3.
- So, C. Y. K., & Chan, J. M. (1992). *Mass media and youth in Hong Kong: A study of media use, youth archetype and media influence*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.
- Wapnick, J. (1976). A review of research on attitude and preference. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 48, 1–20.
- Wapnick, J. (1980). Pitch, tempo, and timbral preferences in recorded piano music.

*Journal of Research in Music Education*, 28, 43–58.

- Welch, G. F. (1986). A developmental view of children's singing. *British Journal of Music Education*, 3(3), 295–303.
- Welch, G. F. (1998). Early childhood musical development. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 11, 27–41.
- Welch, G. F. (2000). The ontogenesis of musical behaviour: A sociological perspective. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 14, 1–13.
- Wu, W. S. (1991). *Xiao-xue yin-yue* [Music for primary schools] (Books 1–12). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Music Publishers.
- Wu, W. S. (1997). *Approach to Music* (Book 1). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Music Publishers.
- Wu, W. S. (1998). *Approach to Music* (Books 2 & 3) (3rd ed.). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Music Publishers.
- Yuen, J. M. (1991) *Yin-yue chu-kai* [First step of learning music] (Books 1–12). Hong Kong: Longman.
- Yuen, J. M., & Chen, H. M. (1998). *Xue yin-yue* [Learning music together] (Books 1–12). Hong Kong: Target Publishing.
- Yung, H. D. (1997). *New course in music* (Books 1 & 2). Hong Kong: Sing Tao Educational Publications.
- Yung, H. D. (1998). *New course in music* (Book 3). Hong Kong: Sing Tao Educational Publications.
- Zdzinski, S. F. (1996). Parental involvement, selected student attributes, and learning outcomes in instrumental music. *Journal Research of Music Education*, 44, 34–48.