

Who Am I? Investigating Identity in Grade 9 Boys Through Reflections on Music Curation and Creation

Further Information
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>
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Introduction

Composition is a key component of most Music programs. At the Grade 9 level, students are often struggling with how to manage theoretical concepts that are key to a successful original work, despite possessing a vast understanding of music through listening via various personal devices. Fine Arts students, on the other hand, do not experience this level of restraint or frustration because they can reflect their uniqueness through various mediums and curricular exercises. I hoped to refocus the music composition process by having a similar Fine Arts approach that would allow my music students to evaluate themselves through the exploration of their creativity

The Research Question

How can opportunities to make personal connections with music impact Grade 9 boys' understanding of the self and their musical compositions?

Research Context and Participants

Upper Canada College is a private boys' school located in Toronto, Canada that provides a complete IB Curriculum. Students take instrumental music from Grades 6 to 12. The 14 participants of this research project were Year 9 Music students. The Music course addresses performance, creation, and reflection as key components of the curriculum. This class setting allowed for consistency with contact time, which helped monitor various aspects of the research.

The Research Action

The boys were involved in a ten-week research process that reflected two phases of research and data gathering. Phase one required students to develop a ten-song curated playlist that reflected their identity. This playlist was shared and discussed in class presentation and in a questionnaire to allow for multiple points of data collection. Phase two required each student to produce a mashup composition using various aspects of each song. Their final work was to reflect their identity as a soundtrack to their lives. At the completion of their composition each student presented their soundtrack and discussed how it represented their identity. In addition, they reflected on a questionnaire. Throughout both sections of the action research, students maintained a log outlining their process.



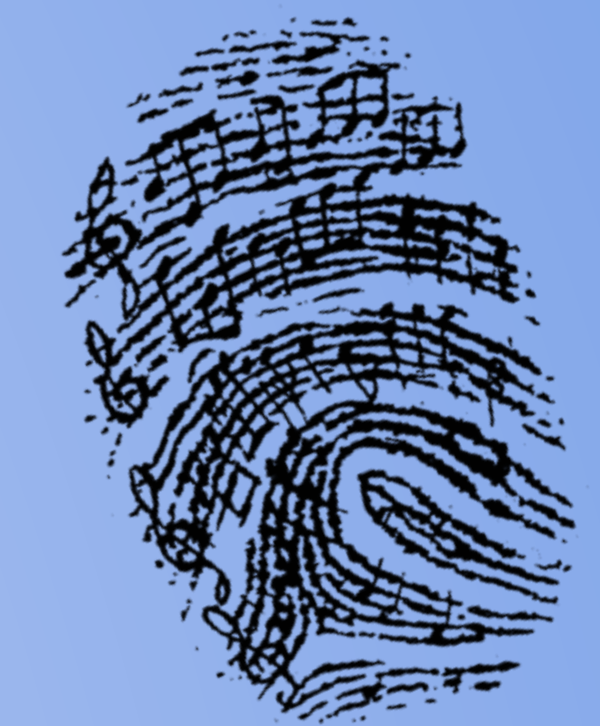
Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative

- Gathered and compared lists of music to see how boys identify with each piece of music.
- Created questionnaires to address specific concepts that reflected the research on musical identity.

Qualitative

- Video interviews
- Journals
- Field notes
- Self-Assessments



Key Findings and Discussion

- Listening repertory of boys was significantly diverse in both musical styles and time periods.
- Boys used music as a means of addressing and coping with various aspects of wellbeing such as social, mental, and physical stressors.
- Paternal figures provided great influence on the type and duration of musical listening.
- Listening selections symbolized the transition from childhood to adolescents.
- Use of particular songs were gateways to various memories.
- Personal identity was produced through deep personal association with artists and their craft.
- Sense of value and self was strongly reflected in the use and command of technology.

Conclusions

- Regardless of their maturity, the boys reflected great diversity of musical interests in their listening. This evidence suggests boys have a strong ability to be open-minded.
- Grade 9 boys represent a large spectrum of understanding of themselves.
- Music is a gateway to meaningful classroom discussion. When asked to personally reflect on their music, boys were able to share intimate aspects of their character.

Key Readings

- Abril, C. R., & Flowers, P. J. (2007). Attention, preference, and identity in music listening middle school students of different linguistic backgrounds. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 55, 204-219. doi: 10.1177/00224294
- Kvarnhall, V. (2017). Utilizing critical realism in empirical gender research: The case of boys and the reproduction of male dominance within popular music life. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 16(1), 26-42.
- Shibasaki, K., & Marshall, N. A. (2013). Gender differences in computer- and instrumental-based musical composition. *Educational Research*, 55(4), 347-360.



"The songs that I like reflect my personality in the songs being played."

