

## Gender, Popular Music, and Music Learning in China's Shanghai

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### Abstract

*This study focused on the collective music experiences and practices of students' involvement with Western and non-Western popular music in Shanghai. Data were gathered through a survey questionnaire given to 1,739 Shanghai students (802 females and 937 males attending Grades 7 through 12), supplemented by semi-structured interview data from a subset (50 females and 10 males attending Grades 7 through 12) of these participants. Statistical and qualitative analyses indicated that gender and preferences for popular music can impact some aspects of individual experiences and attitudes toward learning popular music in school. The implicit premise of this study was what classroom pedagogy and cultural change might reveal from the participation of music education in the continued production and reproduction of gendered music practices in the contemporary music classroom. Though further research may be necessary, the immediate implications of the present study are important for understanding the impact of cultural and racial identity formation of gender and music practices in the contemporary world.*

**Keywords:** gender, popular music, music learning, Shanghai

## Introduction

Schools play an important role as agents of social and cultural production, with an aim of designing strategies to achieve greater justice or opportunities for social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999; Freire, 1973; Gramsci, 1971). There have been calls to develop a social consciousness between and among various individuals and institutions to address the power and potential of music in education as a producer and reproducer of culture. A growing body of research has demonstrated that young students' music preferences are gender-typed and consistently congruent with social contexts and school education. Lucy Green's (1997) *Music, Gender, Education*, regarded as the first book to focus on the role of education in relation to music and gender, showed how females' music practices and gendered musical meanings are a reproduction and continue to replicate in the contemporary music classroom.

Gender differences exist not only in music preferences (Bruce & Kemp, 1993; Christenson & Peterson, 1988; Colley, 2008; Ho, 2001, 2003; LeBlanc, Sims, Siivola, & Obert, 1996) but also in relation to singing and listening (Green, 1997; Hanley, 1998), and playing musical instruments (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Delzell & Leppla, 1992; Hallam, Rogers, & Creech, 2008; Ho, 2009; O'Neill & Boulton, 1996). Regarding composition, male students in the UK, as Green (1997) found, show greater ability and creativity when improvising and composing popular music compared with their female counterparts; in addition, males make better use of technology to create popular music. Males are also better performers of popular music. Dibben (2002) pointed out that males' and females' own gender development can influence their music perceptions. For example, males have more confidence in their own composition abilities, while females think of themselves as better singers. Similarly, in Japan, Koizumi (2002) noted that perceptions dictated that while males were the music makers, females were only consumers of

music. Moreover, in Sweden, music teaching in institutional settings presents gender-based imbalances in terms of choice of musical instruments and genre involvement, insofar as females were insignificant within various contexts of popular music learning (Bjorck, 2011).

Minimal research investigates gender stereotypes in relation to the perspectives of young people and the music that they experience, particularly in Chinese communities. For the purpose of this study, outside Western and non-Western contexts, the term “popular music” describes music that has wide appeal and is commercially available and accessible to a mass audience. This study used statistical data obtained from a survey questionnaire and qualitative data from face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to describe and compare current popular music experiences and practices among males and females inside and outside schools in Shanghai. This paper will conclude with a discussion based on the data collected. First, it is necessary to establish the social contexts in which this study of gender, popular music, and education in Shanghai took place.

### **Social Contexts of Music Cultures and Music Education in Shanghai**

Shanghai’s economic growth and dramatic spatial transformation represent the fastest rate of development among Chinese cities. Since 1978, the Open Door Policy allows a commercial revival in Shanghai, which led to the city becoming a global cultural, economic, trade, and shopping centre. China’s economic and social reforms opened Shanghai’s door to the world, so much so that its urban culture is decisively cosmopolitan. Chinese youths are receptive to international influences and brands, most particularly in Shanghai where they maintain “a vibrant commercial culture and brand culture” (Wang, 2005).

The development of popular music in Shanghai over the last decade reflects the social changes that have taken place in the city. Cultural strategies are an integral part of the

modernizing drive to integrate diverse popular music cultures in the city (see Chen, 2005; Ho & Law, 2012). Hosting regional, national, and international music events has become a significant instrument for the city to increase its influence and to promote awareness of its cultural dynamics. Music festivals in Shanghai, featuring a wide range of music from rock to jazz and pop, have been growing in number. Hip hop CDs, DVDs, fashion magazines, clubs, and performance events are all available in bookstores and supermarkets (Liu, 2005, 2010). In Shanghai, 37.1% of 15 to 25 year olds prefer rap/hip hop (Namer, 2012). According to Guo's (2007) survey on Internet usage and its impact on seven Chinese cities, including Shanghai, the Internet is a platform to share all kinds of materials. Moreover, as many as 66.2% of the participants noted that they habitually downloaded or listened to music online at least weekly (Guo, 2007). Popular music plays a greater role in the everyday lives of most young students, and some have embraced the Internet and MP3 players to manage their popular music collection (Ho, 2007).

Although school music curricula do not highlight popular music, in 2004, the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission encouraged music teachers to be open to the various music styles of diverse cultures in their selection of curriculum contents and teaching strategies, and to the development of a lively music culture throughout the school. In 2005, the Shanghai authorities proposed that popular music in school education should include some Hong Kong and Taiwanese popular songs from among a list of 100 patriotic songs. According to the current national music curriculum guide, school music lessons may also introduce popular songs with healthy lyrics (Ministry of Education, 2011).

## The Study

### Purpose

This study investigated whether gendered popular music practices and experiences were present in Chinese students' daily lives, as well as in music classrooms in Shanghai. We anticipated that stereotypes about learning popular music might influence the music preferences of adolescents, and might therefore determine to some extent the musical and social identity formation of these young students. In addition to documentary analysis, this study adopted two major research methods: a survey questionnaire and interviews. We hypothesized that the gendered demarcation of musical interest in popular music practices and experiences played a role in music education. To test this, the study sought to address three specific research questions:

- (1) What are the differences between males' and females' experiences of popular music in their daily lives?
- (2) To what extent are males' and females' music preferences for learning about popular music in class based on gender stereotypes?
- (3) What are the reasons for males and females differing in their preferences for learning popular music in school?

### Participants

We invited students from five junior secondary schools (four public and one private) and five senior secondary schools (four public and one private), all co-educational, to participate in this study. These schools are in two urban areas of Shanghai: Jiading and Pudong. The former is a new town located in the northwestern part of Shanghai and is the first "wireless city" in Mainland China, while the latter is in the eastern part of Shanghai that was designated a national economic zone in 1990. Many students of these subject schools engage in several extracurricular

activities, such as sports, martial arts, and music, outside school. Learning musical instruments such as the piano and taking instrument examinations is common practice with students in Shanghai.

### **Research Methods**

In early September 2011, we conducted a pilot test of the survey questionnaire with ten secondary students from various grades. After the test, we made minor changes to the wording and the response categories in order to avoid ambiguity. The questionnaire focused on the participants of at least three classes in different grades at the ten schools chosen. Music teachers were free to select the participants, and they served as facilitators for collecting and returning the questionnaires. The questionnaire asked the participants to respond (by checking given options) to questions concerning: (1) personal information, such as gender, age, grade attendance, instrument learning, preferences for popular music, and other music habits; (2) their attitudes and experiences toward the teaching of diverse music styles, including popular music, as well as those toward non-music subjects (1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare to 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often); (3) their views on teaching popular music and associated activities in school; and (4) their attitudes toward learning about popular music and classical music in school (1 = strongly dislike to 4 = strongly like). We selected well-known music style labels, since they proved successful in the pilot and were useful in the main investigation. The question items showed a high level of reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.99$ ).

In the same month, we conducted the survey questionnaire with the help of the teachers at the subject's schools, which asked the teachers to distribute the questionnaires to the students and have them complete them in class. We collected useable questionnaires from 1,739 students

attending Grades 7 through 12 (see Figure 1). Two schools adopted Chinese and English as their teaching mediums, while the other eight mainly used Chinese as their principal teaching medium. The gender distribution among these ten schools was 802 females and 937 males, aged mostly between 12 and 18. Fewer students represented Grades 9, 10, and 12 because they were preparing for public examinations. Among the valid responses, 245 females (60.05%) and 163 males (39.95%) had, or were participating in, instrument training, mainly on Western musical instruments. Figure 1 shows the grade distribution of students in the survey questionnaire (see Figure 1).

We conducted semi-structured interviews within a fairly open framework, which allowed for focused, conversational, two-way communication (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviewees included 60 students (50 females and 10 males, grades 7 through 12) who were learning about music in the ten schools chosen. Teachers recommended interviewees, while some students volunteered. Besides personal information about grade attendance, we asked students to respond to three broad questions referring to: (1) their appreciation of popular music and their reasons for preferring Chinese and English popular songs; (2) their views on teaching popular music in school; and (3) their attitudes toward learning popular and classical music in school. The interviews with the students occurred on an individual basis in the Putonghua language. With consent from both the school authorities and the respondents, we recorded sound files during the interviews. The average time of each interview was about 20 minutes.

## Findings

### Major Questionnaire Findings

The purpose of this study was to survey gender differences in students' current beliefs and attitudes toward popular music and their relationships to their music learning in the ten schools chosen. We administered the questionnaire in Chinese. Data coding used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to structure a dataset for computer analysis, with which to identify and examine students' responses and their relationships. The survey discounted missing or invalid responses. Due to the difficulty of obtaining access to schools, a small sample of ten schools and their respondents limited the survey. Thus, we cannot generalize the data to other schools in Shanghai, as well as to other schools in Mainland China.

*Students' preferences for popular songs in daily life.* The survey asked students to choose their preferences for popular songs from among Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, other Asian countries, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), and other Western countries. The questionnaire showed that the majority of the 1,739 Shanghai students surveyed indicated that they liked popular music. Their favorite popular music was in Putonghua from their homeland in Mainland China (see Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, females provided a comparatively higher responding means compared with males in their answers to questions concerning popular songs from different societies. The difference of means between females and males (column [A – B]) were significantly statistically higher in all the societies, from Hong Kong (mean difference [ $MD$ ] = 0.13,  $p \leq .01$ ) to South Korea ( $MD = 0.36, p \leq .001$ ). Students with instrument training (column [C – D]) gave significantly statistically higher ratings to popular songs from Mainland China ( $MD = 0.11, p \leq .05$ ), Taiwan ( $MD = 0.11, p \leq .05$ ), and the UK and the US ( $MD = 0.16, p \leq .01$ ).



Females with instrument training and those who had visited karaoke booths in the last 12 months were stronger supporters of popular songs from all the societies, with statistically significant higher means compared with their respective male counterparts (see Table 1). Although gender was less significant with respect to preferences for different styles of popular music, “melody” was the major reason that attracted the students. “Singer” appeared to have the least effect on the students’ appreciation of popular music, though females showed a stronger rating for this issue compared with males ( $MD = 0.32$ ).

Both males and females often listened to popular music or watched popular music videos after they completed their homework. The mean for males listening to popular music via the Internet ( $M = 3.23$ ) was slightly higher than that for females ( $M = 3.20$ ) (from 1 = strongly dislike to 4 = strongly like). It is interesting that significantly more females listened to popular music on their way to and from school compared with males (the mean of females = 2.27 and the mean of males = 2.09) (from 1 = never to 4 = very often). This could be explained by the fact that females liked to use a portable music player (iPod/MP3) to listen to popular music, while males preferred to listen and watch popular music via the Internet (see Table 1).

Although many given reasons explain why students preferred certain popular singers, the females who answered gave their main reason as the singer’s voice, while for males the main reason was the rhythmic element of popular songs. The most welcomed popular idols for English songs among females and males were Justin Bieber (a Canadian pop/R&B singer-songwriter and actor), Michael Jackson (regarded by some as the “King of Pop”), and Eminem (an American rapper and songwriter). Among popular Asian idols, the South Korean boy band Super Junior and the Taiwanese singer Jay Chou, who is famous for his fusion of Western rhythm and blues and Chinese music styles, were the most popular idols for both males and females in the survey.

*Students' preferences for popular music in the school curriculum.* We asked students to choose their music preferences from among the music styles taught in music lessons. Females provided higher responding means compared with males among the 22 music types in their preferred school music curriculum (see Table 2); in addition, females obtained a lower percentage with respect to disliking music genres and a higher percentage for liking them. Popular music was the most appreciated style of music among those taught in the music curriculum, with the least appreciated being traditional Chinese vocal music. Males had a higher preference for Western “rap and hip hop songs” (ranked fourth), “blues and jazz” (ranked fifth), and “rock music” (ranked seventh), while “Western punk” was preferred more by females (ranked seventh) than by males (ranked tenth). Apart from school music lessons, both genders wanted to learn more about popular music in Culture and Art lessons (see Table 2).

The study found relatively slight gender differences among the reasons for preferring to learn about popular music in school. The main reason for males was to become “more knowledgeable about popular music,” but females rated this reason fourth (see Table 3). The preferred reason for learning about popular music for females was to “sing their favorite popular songs,” which was also important to males, which ranked second. “I want to know more about my favorite singer” was one of the top three reasons for females, while males rated it fifth.

When asked about the students' preferences for their school's possible promotion of popular music in class, females obtained higher responding rates over all means and activities (see Table 4). Both males and females, however, agreed that broadcasting popular music during lunch break or providing more information about popular music would be the most effective means to promote popular music outside class time in school. We also asked the students to rate their views on the importance of teaching popular music in three areas, including: (1) balancing

learning about Western popular music and classical music; (2) balancing Chinese popular music and classical music; and (3) the importance of using popular songs to promote character development and moral education (from 1 = highly disagree to 4 = highly agree). Again, females showed a higher responding rate compared with males with respect to all three items (see Table 5).

*Possible factors shaping students' preferences for popular music in school.* This study revealed that compared with their education level, gender, karaoke experience, and popular music idols were the most influential factors in shaping the students' preferences for popular music in daily life and in school (see Tables 1 through 4). However, students with instrument training were stronger supporters of popular music from the UK and the US ( $MD = 0.16, p \leq .001$ ) and other Western countries ( $MD = 0.17, p \leq .001$ ), whereas students with no instrument training were stronger supporters of popular music from Mainland China ( $MD = 0.08, p \leq .05$ ). To different extents, females with instrument training and those who had visited karaoke booths in the last 12 months were stronger supporters of a diversity of popular songs from all the societies (including Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, other Asian countries, the UK and the US, and other Western countries), with statistically higher means than their respective male counterparts.

Compared with males, females favoring popular music idols, those who had visited karaoke booths, and those receiving instrument training expressed more demands for their school to provide them with more opportunities to learn about popular music in music lessons and extracurricular activities (see Table 4). The comparative responses between the subgroups of gender, instrument training, popular music idols, and karaoke visits varied in the students' desire to learn about popular music in non-music subjects.

### **Major interview findings**

The semi-structured case study interview data collected in the ten schools chosen, which involved 60 students (50 females and 10 males), supplemented this study. The males and females liked popular music to almost the same extent. Out of the 50 females, only one disliked popular music, while all the males liked popular music. The one female who did not like popular music preferred classical music, such as symphonies and violin music. Most males and females enjoyed listening to popular music for relaxation, and their reasons typically included “popular music is pleasant” and “the rhythm of popular music makes one feel good.” Some students also emphasized that popular music could help them to learn various music elements and styles. With respect to their preferences for particular popular singers, as was also shown in the survey questionnaire, females cited a large variety of popular singers as their favorites, ranging from the Western world to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. In the interviews, Avril Lavigne had the most fans among females, while most males liked Justin Bieber.

There was a prominent difference between preferences for popular songs among males and females. Most of the females preferred English popular songs (21 out of 50 answers), while nearly half of that number of females preferred Chinese popular songs (12 out of 50 answers). Another nine females maintained that they liked both Chinese and English popular songs, and one female said that she did not enjoy popular songs at all. Males, on the other hand, were equally divided between enjoying both Chinese and English popular songs (3 out of 10 answers), preferring Chinese popular songs (3 out of 10 answers), and preferring English popular songs (3 out of 10 answers). Among the students who preferred English popular songs, males noted that the rhythm was more important, while females preferred the melodies and lyrics. Comparatively, popular music from South Korea was more appealing to females than to males. Both genders

listened to popular music often or watched popular music videos after they completed their homework. More females listened to popular music on their way to and from school compared with their male counterparts.

As also shown in the survey questionnaire, both genders agreed that learning about the musical elements of popular music in music lessons would be the most effective way to promote popular music in school. Most students, both males and females, believed that learning popular music helped or encouraged them to learn about music in general (35 out of 50 answers for females, and 7 out of 10 answers for males). For example, some female students said:

I perceive the benefits of listening to popular music that can help me know more about other music styles.

I have a great interest in learning composition techniques and instrumentation of popular music. If I can obtain these skills and knowledge, I will have more understanding of music.

I can recognize and foster a range of music skills and knowledge of popular songs.

I want to understand the power of emotional singing.

I can have better singing skills.

I can equip myself to be a better singer.

I can equip myself to know more about lyrical meaning.

I have an interest in learning the melodies of popular music.

I can benefit from learning the rhythm, melodies, and lyrics of good popular songs.

Some males stated that:

Both performing skills and instrumentation of popular music could help me know more about music.

I want to learn music through composing popular music.

I want to be more capable in understanding the rhythmic patterns of popular music.

I can approach the learning of rhythm through composing popular music.

I can explore the musical structure when composing popular music.

I want to have more understanding in music through knowing popular music.

Overall, many female respondents mentioned that they wanted to learn how to play and sing popular music and how to compose it, while no male respondents wanted to learn about

popular singing techniques in school music lessons. However, some female and male students noted that, due to all students having different preferences, teachers would have great difficulty choosing appropriate popular music to teach. To some extent, students of both genders believed that their school would respect their preferences for popular music and would support them in every aspect of teaching it. The students pointed out that: “our school will teach all healthy and positive lyrics of popular songs,” “our teacher and school respect and understand our interest in popular music,” “our teacher will teach us good rhythmic popular songs,” and “I think that our teacher believes in the use of popular songs to enhance our motivation for learning music in general.”

Despite the welcoming of popular music into the school curriculum, many students (21 out of 50 answers for females and 6 out of 10 answers for males) still preferred only classical music to be taught in music lessons in school. Of the 15 females who thought that popular music should be taught, six of them said that they would also expect all types of music to be taught in music lessons. Six out of 10 males said they would prefer classical music to be taught, while a further three suggested that all types of music should be taught. The students’ reasons for preferring classical music to be taught in music lessons include the following:

Classical music is less likely to be heard and is difficult to learn outside the music classroom. (Nine females and one male made this response.)

We enjoy learning classical music. Classical music helps us appreciate and learn music better in a well-rounded way. (Three females and four males made this response.)

Classical music can reduce my stress, anxiety, and depression. (One male said this.)

Classical music is for all time. (One female made this comment.)

### **Discussion**

The primary concern of this paper was to investigate and compare females’ and males’ experiences of learning about, listening to, and practicing popular music both within and outside

school. It focused on adolescents' music behavior toward popular music in both formal and informal contexts. The results of the study provide further support for the argument that males and females, to some extent, exhibit different attitudes toward listening to and practicing popular music. A generalization of the data collected for this study provides a basis for this discussion and concerns three key issues: (1) gender differences in learning about popular music in the students' daily lives; (2) gender differences in learning about popular music in school; and (3) the students' views on teaching popular and classical music in school. This study argues that the process of socialization in educational institutions and other social spheres may condition female and male students to behave in certain ways in terms of listening to and performing different roles in music in society.

Firstly, popular music plays a central role in the lives of young students in Shanghai. Students' exposure to the various modes of mass media and technologies, such as the radio, television, DVDs, iPads, iPhones, and the Internet, has grown in both width and depth in their daily lives, and has an enormous influence on their music practices. The study of popular music closely connects to the students' music identities and their lives outside school. Popular music is everywhere, including in many department stores, supermarkets, coffee shops, and restaurants. It also accompanies movies, television programs, and even video games. However, this study has shown that females are generally more inclined to engage in popular songs from different societies (including Mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, other Asian countries, the UK and the US, and other Western countries) in their daily lives compared with males (see Table 1). The data showed that adolescent female students seemed to be more open to experiencing diverse popular music styles. Besides the Internet, as compared with males, females had more involvement in listening to popular music or watching popular music videos via iPod/MP3

players, mobile phones, television, radio, and CD players (see Table 1). In particular, females with instrument training and those who had visited karaoke booths in the last 12 months preferred popular songs, with statistically significant higher means compared with their respective male counterparts (see Table 1). The fact that more females than males engage in music training might affect their preference for and exposure to traditional and popular styles of music (e.g., Colley, 2008). There are clear gender differences and gender relations in the students' music preferences and music experiences for popular music in their daily lives. The important issues in this view of identity are whether, to what extent, and how music making and listening to popular music participates in the construction of the emerging and changing social reproduction of gendered identities among young people in their daily lives.

Secondly, the findings from this study indicate that both female and male students would prefer to see popular music and activities related to the learning of popular music in their ideal music curriculum. These findings are consistent with Ho's reports (Ho, 2001, 2003), which showed that females exhibit a greater preference for all music styles to be taught in schools. Similarly, females in this study provided higher responding means compared with their male counterparts with respect to preferences for classical, folk, and popular music in their preferred music curriculum (see Table 2). On the other hand, this also implies that males tend to hold more conservative musical and cultural tastes. Female students also provided more favorable ratings for music activities that relate both inside and outside school. Music teachers may consider the results of this survey in terms of how gender differences affect students' preferred music activities in school. The students' dislike of traditional Chinese vocal music in the music curriculum may be due to their unfamiliarity with that style of music. The data also showed that the acculturation of less positive attitudes toward traditional Chinese vocal and classical music



could be because most Shanghai students (ignoring gender) regarded this music as old-fashioned and outside of their daily lives. Slight gender differences were shown in the reasons that were given for introducing popular music into music lessons, insofar as males generally agreed about having “more knowledge about popular music,” while this reason was rated fourth by females (see Table 3). One major focus would be on the provision of equal access and opportunity for females and males in learning all types of instruments, music activities, and music genres, with no acknowledgement of socially ingrained gender roles. Consequently, alternative methods of music education, involving a greater diversity of teaching methods and resources in which music teachers have conceptualized the study of popular music in schools, developed in the field. Music educators in Shanghai might need to observe how to negotiate the value and meaning of music in different contexts in the school music curriculum (Ho & Law, 2006a, 2006b).

Finally, in spite of students rating popular music as the most preferred music style in school music education in this study, many said they would still prefer to have classical music included in their music lessons. Music education often involves the construction of gender identity and gender differences. Many nations continue to attempt to bridge the gap between students’ music habits within and outside the classroom context. While curricula increasingly represent popular, many music education scholars, such as Green (2006, 2008) and Regelski (2009), have warned music teachers of the differences involved in the teaching and learning of art music and popular music. At the same time, some females and males also agreed that learning diverse music styles and their social backgrounds would be beneficial to learning about music generally. In other words, by exposing students to the rich background of native music traditions and other music styles, the curriculum would enable students to learn about a wide variety of traditional and contemporary music (Green, 2006).

In general, there is a scholarly consensus that formal music learning is mainly associated with classical music. According to Bourdieu (1984), such education plays an important role in aiding and abetting the theory of cultural reproduction and social exclusion (see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Freire, 1973; Gramsci, 1971). The relationship between the structure of knowledge and agency is dialectical rather than oppositional (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999). Popular culture, however, is a site of struggle between the subordinate and the dominant groups in society and education. Connecting with students on their level is consistent with Green (2008), who recommended listening to “young people’s voices” and, as music educators, to consider “their values and their culture seriously” (p. 185). School music education in Shanghai represents a new possibility for challenging the hegemony of the classical and popular canons in both Chinese and Western traditions. There also may be an issue of how the Chinese state generates the gendered discourse of nationalism or nationalist politics as a masculinist enterprise for learning popular music in formal and informal education.

Music educators should examine how the dynamic nature of music materials and mass media can promote music. Creating a positive environment may prove challenging for both genders, as such an environment relies on the climate of the greater community, school culture, and the music curriculum. Educators in today’s pluralistic society need to be aware and have a tolerance for and understanding of their students’ gender, ability, and cultural differences in order to be successful in the classroom. In so doing, students gain access not only to those music genres prescribed in the music curriculum, but also to the musical meanings of popular music, regarding how gender stereotypes, cultural and racial diversity, and expected music behaviors interact and create social identity formation during adolescence. Clear objectives and a regular

review of knowledge content are essential, so that new knowledge demanded by changes in the world can be introduced (Bourdieu, 1999).

### **Implications and Conclusion**

This article sought to clarify the music experiences and practices of students in selected Shanghai secondary schools. The study demonstrated that gender-based music practices and preferences in Shanghai are similar to those in other countries, such as the UK and the US. It has also confirmed previous findings about the impact of gender differences on music preferences, as well as those concerning the value of introducing popular music into the Chinese school curriculum. An examination of gender issues in the music learning involved in this particular study gives insight into the way in which teachers and schools observe and address gender issues in music education.

The implications of this study are threefold. Firstly, it recommends equal access to all types of music and instrument training for both females and males. Compared with their education level, this study also revealed that students' instrument training, gender, karaoke experience, and popular music idols were more influential in shaping their preferences for popular music in their daily lives and in the music curriculum. This aspect of the data might offer empirical support for the benefits of music training in enhancing young people's enjoyment of more complex music styles in class. Future studies could examine the effects of variables, such as gender, preference for popular music, and music training, based on which they might recommend including materials from wider Chinese communities. Secondly, particularly in Chinese communities, the inclusion of popular music in the school curriculum, both for its own sake and as a means of access to other art forms, such as classical music, would encapsulate a dilemma for music education policy. Motivating students to learn in a music classroom

environment is, as studies show, a major challenge for music educators. Schools must implement policies concerning equity so that both females and males have equal opportunities. Thirdly, the gender differences involved in teaching popular music are more challenging for music teachers' selection of music materials and activities, which need to encompass a wider range of criteria than they have previously. Thus, teachers can raise students' motivation while helping them to develop a love for music that could carry on throughout their lives.

An important avenue for future research on gender and popular music learning is to determine whether young students' preferences change when exposed to both females and males in learning popular music from other societies, as well as music activities in both formal and informal contexts. The current findings update and extend previous studies on gender differences in music preferences, adding detail to national and international researches. While the significance of this research is somewhat limited by the population sampling, this research, which examined the gendered preferences among adolescent students in Shanghai, may reflect societal gendered expectations and how students may refute those. The data from the research might suggest the development of curricula that challenge the present attitudes of many teenage students. This study proposes that education practitioners, music educators, and researchers could benefit from these ideas when examining the possibilities and limitations of teaching and learning popular music with respect to how gender education can facilitate music education programs that neither generate nor regulate how males and females learn music in school. Besides gender, such variables as age, social class, and especially race are important determinants in students' music preferences, music practices, and music experience in both formal and informal music education. In this case, perhaps we can move on to this potential for additional research, aiming at a more human curriculum, not only in the scope of gender and

music education but also the wider societal implications of cultural and racial identities in the school music curriculum, for both teachers and students. Further research can also build on these societal implications by including a wider array of music from various genres and exploring music preferences across social contexts, races, and cultures.

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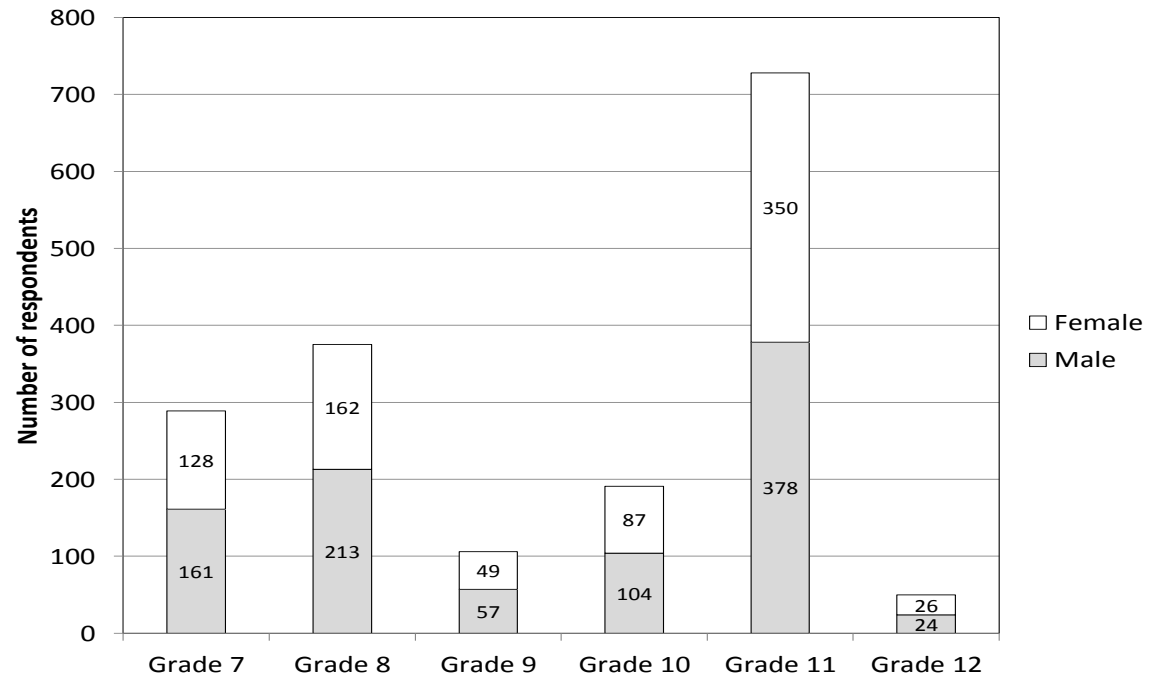


Figure 1. *Grade Distribution of Students in the Questionnaire Survey*

Table 1  
*Students' Preferences for Popular Music (PM) in Their Daily Life*<sup>a, b, c</sup>

	All Schools		Gender			Had Instrumental Training			Had PM Idols			Visited Karaoke		
	Number of Students (N = 1,739)		Female (n = 802)	Male (n = 937)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 408)	No (n = 1,331)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 1,240)	No (n = 499)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 909)	No (n = 830)	Diff. in Means
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Mean	A – B	Mean	Mean	C – D	Mean	Mean	E – F	Mean	Mean	G – H
			A	B		C	D		E	F		G	H	
How much do you like PM from the following societies?														
Mainland China (Putonghua)	3.18	.71	3.21	3.16	.05	3.12	3.20	-.08*	3.23	3.07	.16***	3.18	3.18	.00
Taiwan (Mandarin)	2.72	.84	2.84	2.62	.22***	2.77	2.71	.06	2.80	2.54	.26***	2.82	2.62	.20***
Hong Kong (Cantonese)	2.50	.88	2.49	2.50	-.01	2.54	2.49	.06	2.53	2.42	.12*	2.55	2.44	.11**
Japan	2.85	.90	2.93	2.78	.14***	2.93	2.83	.10	2.89	2.75	.15**	2.87	2.83	.03
South Korea	2.65	.92	2.88	2.45	.43***	2.70	2.63	.07	2.72	2.47	.24***	2.80	2.48	.31***
Other Asian Countries	2.33	.84	2.47	2.21	.26***	2.33	2.33	.00	2.34	2.31	.03	2.38	2.28	.10*
UK and US	3.12	.82	3.25	3.00	.25***	3.24	3.08	.16***	3.19	2.95	.24***	3.22	3.00	.22***
Other Western Countries	2.65	.86	2.75	2.57	.18***	2.79	2.61	.17***	2.69	2.56	.14**	2.73	2.57	.17***
Do you agree that you like PM because of ...?														
Their lyrics	3.15	.70	3.23	3.08	.16***	3.24	3.12	.12**	3.24	2.93	.31***	3.24	3.05	.19***
Their melody	3.46	.64	3.53	3.39	.14***	3.55	3.43	.12***	3.53	3.28	.25***	3.50	3.41	.09**
Their singers	2.84	.87	3.01	2.70	.32***	2.87	2.84	.03	2.98	2.51	.47***	3.00	2.68	.32***
Their power to make you feel resonated	3.22	.76	3.30	3.15	.15***	3.33	3.18	.14**	3.33	2.94	.39***	3.34	3.09	.25***
How often do you listen to PM or watch PM videos ...?														
To and from school	2.17	1.03	2.27	2.09	.18***	2.35	2.12	.23***	2.28	1.91	.37***	2.42	1.91	.51***
During recess	2.38	.98	2.44	2.32	.11*	2.52	2.33	.19***	2.48	2.13	.35***	2.54	2.20	.34***
During lunch time	1.79	.91	1.75	1.82	-.07	1.87	1.76	.11*	1.83	1.68	.15**	1.91	1.65	.27***
During homework time	2.01	.90	1.98	2.03	-.05	2.09	1.99	.10*	2.07	1.87	.19***	2.17	1.84	.33***
After completion of homework	2.87	.98	2.91	2.84	.07	2.98	2.84	.14**	3.01	2.51	.50***	2.99	2.74	.24***
Do you often use the following media to listen/watch PM?														
Internet	3.22	.76	3.20	3.23	-.03	3.29	3.20	.09*	3.27	3.09	.18***	3.31	3.12	.19***
iPod/MP3	3.25	.77	3.33	3.18	.14***	3.38	3.21	.16***	3.35	3.02	.33***	3.38	3.11	.27***
Mobile Phone	2.54	.94	2.67	2.42	.25***	2.60	2.52	.09	2.60	2.39	.21***	2.69	2.36	.33***
Television	2.67	.81	2.75	2.60	.15***	2.62	2.69	-.07	2.71	2.57	.14***	2.72	2.62	.09*

Radio	2.65	.89	2.72	2.58	.13**	2.73	2.62	.11*	2.69	2.55	.14**	2.75	2.54	.21***
CD Player	2.46	.89	2.54	2.40	.14**	2.54	2.44	.09	2.50	2.37	.13**	2.53	2.40	.13**

Note: <sup>a</sup> Response scale: 1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare; and 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often.

<sup>b</sup> Differences in means may differ by 0.01 due to rounding up in calculation by SPSS.

<sup>c</sup> Difference in means with significance: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 2

*Students' Preferences for Popular Music (PM) in their Preferred School Curriculum If They Were Allowed to Choose*<sup>a, b, c</sup>

	All Schools		Gender			Had Instrumental Training			Had PM Idols			Visited Karaoke		
	Number of Students (N = 1,739)		Female (n = 802)	Male (n = 937)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 408)	No (n = 1,331)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 1,240)	No (n = 499)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 909)	No (n = 830)	Diff. in Means
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Mean	A – B	Mean	Mean	C – D	Mean	Mean	E – F	Mean	Mean	G – H
			A	B		C	D		E	F		G	H	
Do you like learning about the following musical styles in music lessons?														
Beijing Opera	1.86	.72	1.91	1.82	.09*	1.83	1.88	-.05	1.82	1.98	-.17***	1.85	1.88	-.03
Kun Opera	1.80	.70	1.84	1.77	.07*	1.72	1.82	-.10**	1.75	1.92	-.17***	1.79	1.81	-.03
Shanghai Opera	1.86	.75	1.90	1.83	.07*	1.78	1.89	-.11*	1.82	1.95	-.13***	1.85	1.87	-.01
Cantonese Opera	1.85	.73	1.89	1.81	.08*	1.83	1.86	-.03	1.81	1.94	-.12**	1.83	1.87	-.03
Chinese Folk Songs	2.14	.83	2.16	2.13	.03	2.10	2.16	-.06	2.11	2.22	-.11*	2.11	2.18	-.07
Shanghai Folk Songs	2.17	.86	2.23	2.13	.10*	2.16	2.18	-.01	2.15	2.24	-.09*	2.19	2.15	.04
Chinese Children Songs (Putonghua)	2.04	.85	2.11	1.98	.13**	1.99	2.05	-.06	2.01	2.12	-.11*	2.06	2.02	.03
Traditional Chinese Orchestra	2.04	.79	2.08	2.01	.07	2.04	2.04	.00	1.99	2.17	-.19***	1.96	2.12	-.16***
Traditional Western Orchestra	2.20	.85	2.27	2.13	.13***	2.29	2.17	.13**	2.16	2.28	-.11*	2.19	2.20	-.01
Traditional Western Opera	2.21	.85	2.33	2.11	.21***	2.33	2.18	.15**	2.18	2.29	-.11*	2.24	2.18	.05
Popular Songs from Mainland China	2.84	.91	2.96	2.74	.22***	2.92	2.81	.11*	2.91	2.65	.26***	2.96	2.70	.26***
Popular Songs from Taiwan	2.58	.94	2.71	2.47	.24***	2.67	2.55	.11*	2.66	2.38	.29***	2.73	2.42	.31***
Popular Songs from Hong Kong	2.42	.92	2.49	2.36	.13**	2.49	2.40	.10	2.47	2.29	.18***	2.56	2.27	.29***
Popular Songs from South Korea	2.56	.98	2.75	2.39	.36***	2.57	2.56	.02	2.62	2.41	.21***	2.71	2.40	.31***
Popular Songs from Japan	2.67	.98	2.79	2.57	.23***	2.72	2.66	.07	2.72	2.55	.17**	2.73	2.61	.12*
Popular Songs from UK and US	2.78	.92	2.95	2.62	.33***	2.90	2.74	.16**	2.86	2.57	.29***	2.90	2.64	.27***
Western Rock Music	2.46	.90	2.47	2.44	.03	2.56	2.42	.14**	2.48	2.40	.08	2.51	2.40	.11*
Western Blues and Jazz Music	2.49	.92	2.52	2.47	.05	2.68	2.44	.25***	2.53	2.41	.12*	2.59	2.39	.20***
Western Rap and Hip Hop Songs	2.57	.93	2.60	2.54	.06	2.68	2.53	.15**	2.63	2.43	.20***	2.71	2.41	.30***
Western Punk	2.44	.90	2.55	2.33	.22***	2.55	2.40	.15**	2.48	2.33	.14**	2.54	2.32	.23***
Modern Western Opera	2.28	.88	2.40	2.19	.21***	2.41	2.25	.17***	2.27	2.33	-.06	2.32	2.24	.08
Other World Music	2.13	.93	2.21	2.07	.14**	2.22	2.11	.12*	2.13	2.15	-.02	2.19	2.07	.12**
In addition to music lessons, do you like learning about PM in the following subjects?														
Chinese Language	2.17	1.01	2.20	2.15	.04	2.29	2.14	.15**	2.22	2.06	.16**	2.32	2.01	.31***

English Language	2.42	1.01	2.48	2.37	.11*	2.58	2.37	.20***	2.49	2.26	.23***	2.58	2.25	.34***
Math/Science	1.97	1.02	1.96	1.98	-.02	2.01	1.96	.05	2.00	1.91	.09	2.08	1.86	.22***
Social Studies/Political Subject	2.10	1.03	2.11	2.10	.00	2.12	2.10	.02	2.13	2.03	.10	2.18	2.02	.16**
Culture and Art	2.51	1.07	2.61	2.42	.19***	2.72	2.44	.28***	2.59	2.30	.29***	2.65	2.35	.30***
Other Subjects	2.07	1.11	2.07	2.07	.00	2.18	2.03	.15*	2.13	1.93	.20***	2.20	1.93	.27***

Note: <sup>a</sup> Response scale: 1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare; and 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often.

<sup>b</sup> Differences in means may differ by 0.01 due to rounding up in calculation by SPSS.

<sup>c</sup> Difference in means with significance: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 3

*Students' Reasons for Supporting the Promotion of Popular Music (PM) in Their School<sup>a, b, c</sup>*

	All Schools		Gender			Had Instrumental Training			Had PM Idols			Visited Karaoke		
	Number of Students (N = 1,739)		Female (n = 802)	Male (n = 937)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 408)	No (n = 1,331)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 1,240)	No (n = 499)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 909)	No (n = 830)	Diff. in Means
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Mean	A – B	Mean	Mean	C – D	Mean	Mean	E – F	Mean	Mean	G – H
			A	B		C	D		E	F		G	H	
How important are the following reasons for learning PM in school?														
I want to have more knowledge about PM.	3.15	.70	3.21	3.09	.12***	3.18	3.14	.05	3.24	2.93	.31***	3.23	3.05	.18***
I want to learn about more music through PM.	3.14	.72	3.22	3.06	.16***	3.23	3.11	.12**	3.21	2.95	.26***	3.21	3.06	.15***
I want to know more about my favourite singers.	3.08	.78	3.22	2.96	.25***	3.12	3.07	.05	3.19	2.81	.39***	3.22	2.92	.30***
I want to practise my singing skills.	3.09	.77	3.21	2.99	.22***	3.24	3.05	.19***	3.19	2.84	.35***	3.22	2.95	.27***
I want to sing as well as my popular song idols.	3.01	.82	3.11	2.93	.18***	3.17	2.97	.20***	3.12	2.75	.38***	3.16	2.86	.30***
I want to sing my favourite popular songs.	3.16	.76	3.25	3.08	.16***	3.26	3.13	.13**	3.24	2.95	.29***	3.29	3.01	.28***
I am encouraged by my school music teachers.	2.91	.83	3.00	2.82	.18***	3.02	2.87	.14**	2.98	2.73	.24***	2.99	2.82	.17***
I am encouraged by my instrumental teachers.	2.86	.85	2.95	2.78	.16***	3.04	2.80	.24***	2.93	2.70	.23***	2.94	2.77	.18***
I am encouraged or influenced by my parents.	2.87	.84	2.97	2.78	.19***	3.00	2.83	.18***	2.93	2.71	.23***	2.96	2.77	.19***
I am influenced by my classmates or friends.	2.93	.81	3.02	2.86	.16***	3.05	2.90	.15***	2.97	2.84	.13**	3.02	2.83	.19***
I have the ability to learn PM well.	2.95	.81	3.03	2.87	.15***	3.11	2.90	.21***	3.02	2.75	.27***	3.06	2.82	.23***
I hope to develop my career in PM.	2.65	.91	2.73	2.58	.15***	2.72	2.63	.08	2.71	2.51	.20***	2.75	2.54	.21***
PM is closely related to my daily life.	3.00	.82	3.09	2.93	.17***	3.09	2.98	.11*	3.12	2.72	.40***	3.15	2.85	.30***
I do not like classical/traditional music.	2.62	.97	2.60	2.63	-.02	2.48	2.66	-.17**	2.64	2.55	.10	2.61	2.62	-.02

Note: <sup>a</sup> Response scale: 1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare; and 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often.

<sup>b</sup> Differences in means may differ by 0.01 due to rounding up in calculation by SPSS.

<sup>c</sup> Difference in means with significance: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .



Table 4

*Students' Preferences for Schools' Possible Actions to Promote Popular Music (PM) in Their School<sup>a, b, c</sup>*

	All Schools		Gender			Had Instrumental Training			Had PM Idols			Visited Karaoke		
	Number of Students (N = 1,739)		Female (n = 802)	Male (n = 937)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 408)	No (n = 1,331)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 1,240)	No (n = 499)	Diff. in Means	Yes (n = 909)	No (n = 830)	Diff. in Means
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Mean		Mean	Mean		Mean	Mean		Mean	Mean	
			A	B	A – B	C	D	C – D	E	F	E – F	G	H	G – H
How important are the following ways the school could use to promote PM in music lessons?														
Incorporating popular music elements	3.27	.72	3.34	3.21	.13***	3.44	3.22	.22***	3.35	3.07	.28***	3.39	3.15	.24***
Teaching PM	3.20	.75	3.28	3.13	.15***	3.36	3.15	.21***	3.27	3.02	.25***	3.30	3.08	.22***
Teaching the songs of popular singers	3.10	.80	3.18	3.04	.14***	3.23	3.06	.16***	3.18	2.90	.28***	3.23	2.96	.27***
Teaching score reading	2.85	.88	2.98	2.75	.23***	3.04	2.80	.24***	2.91	2.72	.19***	2.94	2.75	.19***
Teaching aural training	2.87	.86	3.00	2.76	.24***	2.98	2.84	.13**	2.92	2.75	.17***	2.95	2.79	.16***
Teaching musical instruments	2.80	.86	2.94	2.69	.25***	2.91	2.77	.14**	2.85	2.69	.16***	2.84	2.76	.08*
Teaching performance activities	2.92	.82	3.02	2.84	.18***	3.09	2.87	.22***	3.00	2.73	.27***	3.01	2.83	.18***
Teaching music appreciation	3.11	.76	3.20	3.04	.16***	3.28	3.06	.21***	3.18	2.96	.22***	3.19	3.03	.15***
Teaching songwriting	2.84	.86	2.93	2.76	.17***	2.95	2.81	.14**	2.89	2.72	.17***	2.94	2.73	.21***
Teaching the history of Western PM	2.92	.86	3.04	2.81	.24***	3.00	2.89	.10*	2.95	2.84	.11*	2.96	2.87	.09*
Teaching the history of China's PM	2.91	.84	3.01	2.82	.19***	2.99	2.88	.10*	2.93	2.83	.10*	2.95	2.85	.10*
Teaching the history of other Asian countries' popular music	2.83	.88	2.96	2.72	.24***	2.90	2.81	.09	2.88	2.72	.16***	2.88	2.78	.09*
How important are the following ways the school could use to promote PM outside class time?														
Inviting PM singers to come to perform	3.07	.91	3.17	2.99	.18***	3.24	3.02	.23***	3.15	2.86	.30***	3.21	2.92	.29***
Inviting PM writers/singers to share	3.11	.84	3.19	3.05	.14***	3.26	3.07	.20***	3.20	2.89	.32***	3.24	2.97	.27***
Organizing activities on creating PM	3.03	.86	3.10	2.96	.14***	3.20	2.98	.22***	3.11	2.83	.28***	3.16	2.88	.28***
Organizing classes on electronic musical instruments	3.07	.81	3.18	2.98	.20***	3.27	3.01	.26***	3.15	2.87	.28***	3.19	2.94	.25***
Organizing workshops on electronic PM	3.02	.81	3.13	2.92	.21***	3.25	2.95	.30***	3.09	2.83	.27***	3.15	2.88	.27***
Inviting tutors to teach performance skills	3.02	.83	3.11	2.94	.17***	3.26	2.94	.31***	3.08	2.86	.22***	3.13	2.89	.24***
Organizing contests on PM composition	3.05	.84	3.16	2.95	.21***	3.19	3.00	.19***	3.13	2.84	.29***	3.22	2.86	.36***
Organizing activities on composing lyrics	3.09	.82	3.19	3.00	.20***	3.18	3.06	.13**	3.15	2.93	.23***	3.25	2.91	.34***

Supporting students to organize PM bands	3.11	.80	3.18	3.04	.15***	3.31	3.05	.26***	3.18	2.91	.27***	3.25	2.95	.30***
Broadcasting PM during lunch break	3.21	.77	3.29	3.14	.15***	3.37	3.16	.21***	3.30	3.00	.30***	3.33	3.08	.25***
Providing more information about PM	3.15	.79	3.25	3.06	.18***	3.26	3.11	.15***	3.24	2.91	.33***	3.26	3.02	.24***

Note: <sup>a</sup> Response scale: 1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare; and 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often.

<sup>b</sup> Differences in means may differ by 0.01 due to rounding up in calculation by SPSS.

<sup>c</sup> Difference in means with significance: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Note: <sup>a</sup> Response scale: 1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare; and 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often.

<sup>b</sup> Differences in means may differ by 0.01 due to rounding up in calculation by SPSS.

<sup>c</sup> Difference in means with significance: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 5  
*Students' Preferences in Other Items* <sup>a, b, c</sup>

	All Schools		Gender			Had Instrumental Training			Had PM Idols			Visited Karaoke		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Female	Male	Diff. in Means	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff. in Means	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff. in Means	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff. in Means
How important are the following items?														
Balancing learning about Western popular music and classical music	.97	.85	.08	.87	22***	.13	.92	21***	.99	.92	.06	.02	.90	12**
Balancing Chinese popular music and classical music	.01	.83	.12	.92	20***	.10	.99	11*	.05	.93	12**	.03	.00	.04
The importance of using popular songs to promote character development and moral education	.11	.83	.17	.06	12**	.11	.11	.00	.17	.97	20***	.17	.05	12**

Note: <sup>a</sup> Response scale: 1 = very unimportant, strongly dislike, strongly disagree, or rare; and 4 = very important, strongly like, strongly agree, or very often.

<sup>b</sup> Differences in means may differ by 0.01 due to rounding up in calculation by SPSS.

<sup>c</sup> Difference in means with significance: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .