UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

MUSIC PREFERENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN A MULTI-MUSICAL COUNTRY

MIRANDA YEOH POH-KHOON

FEM 1999 5

MUSIC PREFERENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN A MULTI-MUSICAL COUNTRY

By

MIRANDA YEOH POH-KHOON

Thesis submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in the
Faculty of Human Ecology,
Universiti Putra Malaysia.

April 1999

UPM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank a great multitude of people who have provided professional help, gracious counsel and advice. I am grateful to my research committee Mr. Chan Cheong Jan, Dr. Minni Ang and Dr. Tengku Aizan Hamid for their dedication and commitment.

I also thank researchers abroad especially Prof. Albert Leblanc, Prof. Wendy Sims and Prof. Victor Fung for their kind advice, encouragement and practical help in sending much material for Literature Review that was necessary for a pioneer work to take off in Malaysia.

My thankfulness extends to Dr. Mark Rochester, Ms. Liew Ai-Lin, and Professor Zakhid Khaknarazov, besides Mr. Chan and Dr. Minni, for their professional assistance as judges of the music excerpts. For the creation of the prototype CD used for the Listening Test, I must thank Dr. Minni and Ms. Ong Bee-Suan. For help in giving my questionnaires a 'make-over' and making it more user-friendly, I must also thank Dr. Minni.

I am grateful to Dr. Bahaman Abu Samah, and Dr. Jegak Uli who have helped me to have a thorough working knowledge of SPSS as well as the gruelling statistics that form its backbone. I must also thank Dr. Aminah Ahmad and Dr. Chulan who have contributed ideas to the research design and model.

My thanks are also due to the Academic Division, Administration of UPM for giving me formal permission to carry out the research. I thank the deans of these faculties: FEM, FSAS, FBM and Bio-industry, and the individuals: Dr. Dzolkifli, Dr Umarani, and Tengku Hanidza, who have directly helped to reach the selected respondents. My gratitude extends to all the respondents who participated voluntarily and did not expect payment.

I must also express my thanks to all the staff and students at Music House and Sekolah Menengah Seri Kembangan for their friendship and encouragement. I remember especially Ms Lam Ming-Huey and Ms. Barno who gave lots of friendly advice and Ms. Lee Yoke-Fun who accompanied me on trips to buy cassettes and CDs. Mr. Mahmud helped me to transport the audio equipment to the various venues of research.

Nearer home, I must thank my friends Debbie, Joyce, Jean, Mun and Daniel for their practical help and encouragement. I thank Pastor Ho, Linda and all my church friends for their prayers. I remember that more is achieved through prayers than we can think or imagine. Most of all, I must thank my aunt Yeoh Cheng-Lim for her confidence that I can survive post-graduate studies and any other challenge by God's grace and mercy. Thanks to God for saving faith and every blessing.

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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By

MIRANDA YEOH POH-KHOON

April 1999

Chairman: Mr. Chan Cheong Jan

Faculty: Human Ecology

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships between music preference and each of the four independent variables music characteristics, social influence factors, musical training and familiarity with the music. Ten excerpts of each of the three types of music Commercial, Western Art and Malaysian were recorded on a CD. This is the first instance when a CD, rather than a cassette, is used to contain the sound stimulus. It is also a pioneer work in which preferences for Malaysian Music is studied alongside preferences towards Commercial and Art Music, hence Malaysian genre preferences are discussed in greater detail. Music characteristics, social influences, musical training and familiarity were variables that have been identified in the literature review. Music characteristics included tempo, rhythmic clarity, dynamics, melodic smoothness, pitch, harmony, timbre and mood. Preferences are analysed separately for each of the types of music, since Western Music and Malaysian Music do not share many common characteristics. The social influence variables were influences from family, peers, teachers and media. Musical

training was considered as general, overall training in music as well as training for acquiring instrumental skills. Preferences were indicated on a seven-point scale. Familiarity was shown on a three-point scale. The respondents were 171 undergraduates, randomly selected from a local university. Subjects listened to the CD containing the music excerpts and indicated their preferences and familiarity. They also provided demographic data and information concerning their social environment and musical training. The subjects were unpaid. The results showed that all the four independent variables had a bearing upon music preferences. Of the four, familiarity with the music and music characteristics were the most significant correlates for each type of music, although the other two variables also affected music preference significantly. Respondents indicated that the influence of media and peers were higher than the influence of family and teachers, but it was the influence of family and teachers that actually correlated with preference for Commercial and Western Art Music, but not Malaysian Music. Musical training had the highest positive correlation with preference for Western Art Music, among the three types of music. Familiarity and musical characteristics were the correlates that contributed to preference for all the three types of music.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains.

PILIHAN MUZIK GOLONGAN MAHASISWA DI DALAM NEGARA MULTI-MUZIK

Oleh

MIRANDA YEOH POH-KHOON

April 1999

Pengerusi: **En. Chan Cheong Jan**

Fakulti: **Ekologi Manusia**

Tujuan penyelidikan ini ialah untuk mengkaji hubungan di antara pilihan muzik dan setiap daripada empat pembolehubah iaitu ciri-ciri muzik, pengaruh sosial, pembelajaran muzik dan kebiasaan dengan muzik itu. Sepuluh petikan daripada setiap tiga golongan muzik Komersil, Barat dan Malaysia dirakamkan pada satu cakera padat. Ini merupakan kali pertama sebuah cakera padat, dan bukannya suatu kaset, digunakan untuk menyimpan rangsangan muzik. Penyelidikan ini juga merupakan kajian sulung untuk mengetahui pilihan muzik Malaysia, selain daripada muzik Barat dan Komersil. Oleh sebab itu, pilihan genre muzik Malaysia dibincang dengan lebih terperinci. Keempat-empat pembolehubah yang dikaji telah dibuktikan mempunyai hubungan dengan pilihan muzik. Ciri-ciri muzik adalah termasuk tempo, irama, dinamik muzik, kelicinan melodi, pic, harmoni, kualiti *['timbre']* bunyi dan mood. Skor pilihan telah dianalisa secara berasingan untuk tiga golongan muzik itu kerana muzik dari Barat tidak mempunyai banyak ciri-ciri yang sama dengan Muzik Malaysia. Pembolehubah pengaruh sosial yang dikaji ialah pengaruh

daripada keluarga, rakan, guru dan media. Pembelajaran muzik telah dipertimbangkan daripada dua segi, yakni daripada segi am atau keseluruhan dan daripada segi penguasaan kemahiran instrumental. Skor pilihan ditunjukkan dengan menggunakan skala Likert tujuh titik dan skor kebiasaan ditentukan dengan skala tiga titik. Responden terdiri daripada 171 orang mahasiswa yang telah dipilih secara rawak daripada sebuah Universiti tempatan. Responden itu menjalankan satu sesi pendengaran cakera padat yang mengandungi petikan-petikan muzik, dan menandakan skor pilihan dan skor kebiasaan pada setiap petikan muzik itu. Mereka juga memberi keterangan demografik dan maklumat mengenai suasana pengaruh sosial dan pembelajaran muzik. Responden tidak diberi ganjaran. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa kesemua empat pembolehubah utama itu memberi kesan kepada pilihan muzik oleh seorang individu. Antara empat pembolehubah utama, kebiasaan dengan muzik yang didengar merupakan faktor penentu yang paling besar kesannya, diikuti dengan ciri-ciri muzik, meskipun dua lagi pembolehubah yang lain juga mempengaruhi pilihan muzik pada kadar yang ketara dari segi statistik. Responden menunjukkan bahawa pengaruh media dan rakan adalah lebih tinggi daripada pengaruh keluarga dan guru, tetapi pengaruh keluarga dan gurulah yang memberi kesan kepada skor pilihan muzik untuk Muzik Komersil dan Muzik Klasik Barat walaupun tiada kesan kepada pilihan Muzik Malaysia. Pembelajaran muzik telah memberi kesan positif yang paling tinggi terhadap pilihan Muzik Klasik Barat. Kebiasaan dengan muzik dan ciri-ciri muzik telah memberi pengaruh yang paling penting kepada skor pilihan ketiga-tiga golongan muzik yang dikaji.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Music is the subset of the entirety of sounds, which may be shaped to express and communicate meanings and feelings. It is an aural art form, based on the various permutations of sound-notes in time. Music characteristics included in this study are tempo, rhythm, dynamics, melody, pitch, harmony, timbre, and mood; but not all of these characteristics must be present or given the same emphasis in every piece of music.

Although Malaysia has a rich musical heritage (Matusky & Tan, 1997), music education was not accorded much importance until 1983, when Music became a compulsory subject within the Integrated Primary School Curriculum *[Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah, KBSR]*. The new curriculum is parallel with the aims of the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education which include the development of harmonious intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical growth within the individual (Ministry of Education, 1994).

Apart from the provision of general music education within the education system, private instrumental lessons are also provided in some families. Providing music education implies exposing an individual to many genres of music of various origins like art music, or traditional cultural music. A person will not just be

exposed to the media and its preponderance of popular and rock music. The individual will be better able to decide his/her preferences, rather than let it be decided for him/her. Bandura (1986), in his Social Cognitive Theory, proposed that human attitudes increasingly model after the media.

The research focus is on music preferences and the factors that may influence an individual's preferences. What are the music preferences of our Malaysian undergraduates? What are the factors that contribute to shape these preferences? According to LeBlanc, the factors which may influence music preferences consist of the musical stimulus and the 'listener's cultural environment' (LeBlanc, 1987). Thus, the main variables in the present research: music characteristics; social influences of family, peers, teachers and the media; musical training and familiarity with the music are probable correlates, supported by literature review.

The Research Problem

The present research proposes to identify the preferred types of music and the factors that contribute to the preferences. Studies have indicated that liking for music may lead to greater musical learning by the individual (Asmus, 1989; Fung, 1995). This is a reason for music educators to carry out music preference research. The intention of achieving greater musical learning and growth must be clarified. This researcher assumes that the results of this study will build on the perspective of

humanistic orientations toward the concern for the individual. It is aimed at fostering musicality or the positive response to and the enjoyment of music. It does not concentrate solely on producing musicians or diverting music preference to some direction which is thought of as more expressive, natural, or superior.

Although there has been no research in this area in Malaysia, the variables selected have been studied in the West. LeBlanc's model and interactive theory of music preference (1982) and Finnas's review of music preferences (1989) provide strong bases for the choice of variables selected for this present study. This is the first occasion when preferences for Malaysian Music are studied alongside the two other major types of music, Western Art Music and to some extent, Commercial Music that represent the content of almost every music syllabus.

What is the music that appeals to Malaysian undergraduates and what are the reasons for these preferences? Each of the musical factors and extra-musical factors is studied in relation to music preferences, using a multivariate design. The musical characteristics considered are genre, tempo, rhythm, dynamics, melody, pitch, harmony, timbre and mood. The extra-musical factors include social influences, from family, peers, teachers and the media. Musical training and familiarity with the music are also considered as extra-musical variables that may influence preferences.

This study attempts to describe music preference as a 'behaviour determinant', as termed by Bandura (1986). The 'personal determinants' of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory include the individual's musical training and

his/her familiarity with the music. They are part of the extra-musical factors. Bandura's 'environmental determinants' will encompass social and personal influence variables [LeBlanc's 'cultural environment'] as well as environmental events like musical events where the music stimulus is the prime focus of attention. Hence variables of Bandura's 'environmental determinants' include LeBlanc's 'intra-musical' variables. The author adds a further portion to LeBlanc's Model of the Interactive Theory of Music preferences (1982) to show the relevance of the awareness of current music preferences for musicians and composers.

Finally, for the purpose of the research a prototype CD Listening Test was created. As far as can be ascertained, this is the first instance when a CD was used. Previous researchers including Fung (1996) had recorded the sound stimulus on cassettes. The sound quality of the CD used in the CDLT was definitely an improvement over the sound of the initial recordings that had employed cassettes because extraneous noise had been eliminated by using specialist digital audio editing software.

Significance of the Study

This research is necessary because there has been no research about music preferences and its correlates in Malaysia. A literature search was conducted at the institutes of higher learning in this country in May 1997. Furthermore, music preference studies in the West (e.g. by LeBlanc *et al.*) mainly involved the use of

Western music as stimuli. This research is different from many of LeBlanc's, in having a multivariate design and in using music of Malaysian origin and Commercial Music, besides Western Art Music.

Since there has been no research, there is also no source of knowledge to help music educators. Research is a necessary precursor activity to curriculum planning, or to the scheduling of lessons within a music course. Music educators recommend that we start with what students favour or prefer, then slowly and gradually encourage them to extend that liking for a wider range of music styles (LeBlanc, 1983; Shehan, 1986).

Asmus found that affect for music was one of five factors that significantly explained motivation in music learning (Asmus, 1989). Fung concluded that music preference may be a 'springboard for further music learning' (Fung, 1995). Hence, preference for a broad range of music may help the motivated student who is yet a novice to attain musicianship and to bridge the gap to become an 'expert', with a wide, overall knowledge of music. An empirical research would gather the necessary data concerning music preference and its correlates. Thus, the research will help to solve the problems of music teachers who need to know which characteristics of the music they teach [among other factors], will interest and motivate their students.

The identification of music preferences may contribute some insights to the individual's musical perception in a multi-musical country like Malaysia. This

research will source out the music characteristics belonging to the preferred music. This may also be useful provide a new approach to music composition for Malaysian musicians and composers, from the viewpoint of local reception.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The general objective is to examine some musical and extra-musical factors that correlate with the music preferences of UPM students, some of whom are majoring in music. However, the majority of the undergraduate respondents are enrolled in non-music courses. The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To determine which music characteristics contribute to music preferences. Each of the music characteristics is studied and analysed separately for each of the three music types: Commercial, Western Art and Malaysian Music.
2. To examine the relationships between selected social variables and music preferences.
3. To determine the relationship between musical training and music preferences.
4. To investigate the relationship between familiarity with the music and preferences.

The 4 null hypotheses that are to be tested are:

Ho_1: Music characteristics do not contribute to an individual's music preferences.

Ho_2: The influences of social variables [family, peers, teachers and media] do not contribute to an individual's music preferences.