

Our group wanted to look into the evolution of a person's musical taste in a cultural and personal sense. We narrowed our initial topic interests to international music and its many connections to previous class readings and takeaways. Specifically, we highlighted the idea that "music resonates and signals" (Giles, 2009). From this connection, we thought it would be interesting to research the connection between memory, personal development, and music. From our findings, we concluded that music is a reflection of an individual's memory of their environment as they journey from childhood to adulthood. Before our research, we had no idea of the significance of the connecting between memory and music. Throughout our research, we learned about the importance of the connection with music and memories of many aspects of our lives. Additionally, we learned that this connection can be seen with everyone who listens to music, no matter their nationality.

The childhood environment is incredibly important as a person matures into adulthood. In, "Before They Walk in the Door: Environmental Influences on Musical Ability in Early Childhood and Implications for Nurturing the Nurturers" Venessa L. Bond outlines how crucial a person's childhood experiences and environment are to their musical development. She also outlines what the ideal environment looks like - it would be the perfect balance between nature and nurture. This environment would be equal parts intuitive parenting and observation/support of a child's music upbringing. The musical upbringing of a child is directly impacted by the culture of the family. Morrison et al. references a study that concluded that people were able to remember music from their own culture much better than music from a different culture, regardless of if they were trained to listen to it. This held true across the board, regardless of the age of the participant. This is important because it shows the bond that culture has with music is strong for both adult and child listeners.

A study was performed on seventy-three marketing majors to assess which historical episodes are most commonly associated with music (Baumgartner, 1992). The responses indicated that the experiences that tend to leave the most significant musical impressions are romantic encounters. Notably, it is often our time with a loved one that impacts our lives the most. So it's no wonder that these memories create strong associations with particular songs. However, the study indicates that in order for this to be true, important memories must affect our views on music. This in turn causes change in an individual's musical taste. Another study showed that when presented with a variety of music styles, people will always best remember music from their own geographical culture (Demorest et al., 2016). Although the focus of this experiment was particularly centered around cultural bias, the principal still applies to the connection of music with our memories and personal experiences.

We began with the question, how does an individual's taste in music evolve and become more culturalized and understood with time? Through our prior knowledge of how music resonates with people gained from Frith and our knowledge gained through research, we were able to construct our thesis. Reading Morrison et al.'s article provided us with insight into how people connect with music from their own culture versus music from a different culture. Reading Baumgartner taught us that music is connected to memory. From this information, we were able to deduce our thesis, which is that music is a reflection of an individual's memory of their environment as they journey from childhood to adulthood.

When searching for sources to use as class readings, we first split up and gathered as many texts individually as we could that seemed relevant to our topic. We then skimmed the content and chose particular articles to use for our annotated bibliography. From there, we selected readings from the bibliography to assign the class based on which of them we thought

provided the most relevant evidence to our thesis. We also took strongly into consideration how much discussion we thought a given source would provoke. For example, we picked Vanessa L. Bond's "Before They Walk in the Door: Environmental Influences on Musical Ability in Early Childhood and Implications for Nurturing the Nurturers" because of its strong connections to our music in childhood development discussion. We wanted our class to be thinking about the role that music plays in adolescence before coming to class and discussing, so we deliberately picked a reading that shared these themes.

Similarly, we selected Morrison et al.'s "Enculturation Effects in Music Cognition: The Role of Age and Music Complexity" for its shared themes with our thesis. They show that listeners connect more easily to music from cultures they are familiar with as opposed to music from cultures that are foreign to them. Additionally, it relates to our thesis because of its evidence pointing towards both children and adults forming definitive bonds with particular music that they listen to.

Throughout the class discussion, we found a handful of questions which increasingly engaged the students and were found useful to our overall presentation. The first was the opening question, "which interaction do you think is the most influential to a child's musical experience: parents, peers, tv, or other media?" The responses from this question were varied, which opened the door for deeper, more personal conversation into the development of influence throughout the students' lifetime. This led directly to the question of the importance of parental and familial musical background on a child's musical journey. Many students were able to relate to the idea that the environment a child is surrounded with, albeit musical or otherwise, creates a huge impact into the child's development and creation of memory. In addition to our questions, we included three activities throughout the presentation both to keep the students' attention and also

to engage their thoughts on memories' connection with music. The most useful of them was the creation of a three-song playlist of songs connected with strong memories. The conversation created from this activity allowed the students to be vulnerable and openly expressive with their experiences connected with strong memories which strengthened our overall thesis and hypothesis.

In the beginning there was a lot of discussion about the influence of parents in the music tastes during adolescent years. There were two main camps in regard to this question: those whose parents strongly influenced their music taste in a positive way and those whose parents influenced their music in a negative way. There was also an interesting discussion around how it depends based on different generations. Millennials and older Gen-Z's learned songs from their parents and the radio (which was often controlled by the parents). Younger Gen-Z and Generation Alpha (the newest generation) learn a lot of their songs from social media, specifically TikTok.

The discussion surrounding censoring music for children was also interesting and had two seemingly divided views. There was a general consensus that it depends on the age of understanding about what they are actually listening to. When a child is an infant they do not understand what they are listening to as opposed to a five or six year old. The discussion then segwayed to comparing this situation to the violent video game argument. Similar to how violent video games did not lead to a more violent generation, and how games like Grand Theft Auto did not lead to a generation of carjacking; it was widely agreed that listening to suggestive music did not lead to promiscuous and rebellious children. This is actually in direct opposition of the study's conclusion referenced in "Music Taste Groups and Problem Behavior". The actions of children and teens are more related to their peer group. Since music has the ability to bring

people together, if the group that the child in question was identifying with based on their music taste was more rebellious, then the burden of the actions would be placed on the group not on the type of music they listened to. Music is a tool used to signal something to the outside world. As concluded in discussion, music brings people together into groups. Some of these groups happen to do bad things, but correlation does not equal causation. Just because a group that listens to a certain genre of music behaves a certain way does not mean that the music itself is the reason the group acts the way they do.

At the end of the presentation, the discussion concluded that outside influences had a large impact on a person's music tastes. This does not have to be just friends or family, it can also include society. This was especially the case for the Millennial and older Gen-Z's because they grew up listening to the radio; therefore, were almost spoonfed what they should like. It was also agreed upon that the class would show their kids many different styles of music. Most of the class wanted to encourage their kids to find their own genre of music that they love, so mass exposure would help. Mass musical exposure would allow children to be exposed to multiple cultures also, stimulating the child's development and diversifying their musical palate.

Our thinking about our topic has changed as a result of the discussion. We asked a lot of questions that connected music to the environment. Some people commented on how the generation an individual was born in plays a role in the type of music they listen to. Currently, we live in the age of TikTok music. Although people of all ages use TikTok generation alpha kids have been the most influenced by it. Therefore, their music tastes probably reflect TikTok music more so than anything else. TikTok is a media source and some of our classmates mentioned how media also affects what you listen to. For example, when records and CDs were the main source of music, people would listen to the entire album. Now, there are streaming

services that allow you to listen to one song at a time and gives you access to music of different decades and genres.

The class also discussed the different types of environments that one can cultivate in terms of music. We considered if parents should censor their children's music because kids are like sponges and there are a lot of things children should not know before a certain age. However, determining the age at which you should stop censoring your child's music is difficult to define because every child is different. Also, parents have to do their best to monitor the people their children hang around because kids are very impressionable. Nevertheless, it is important to find a balance between cultivating an environment where children are able to freely express themselves and keeping your kids on a successful path.

Talking about these topics helped us discover how we could further develop our thesis. The improved thesis is, music is a reflection of an individual's memory of their environment as they journey from childhood to adulthood. A person's environment can be affected by the generation in which they are born, their friends and family, and the source of their music (i.e. streaming platform, radio, etc.). This improved thesis specifies how the environment can affect one's music tastes.

Tia

Initially, I thought this assignment would be just another example of making students lead class discussion as an attempt (note "attempt") to make them think critically, and I fully expected this goal to go by the wayside in favor of focusing on achieving an A. However, I was pleasantly surprised that each group was able to bring great ideas and points to the table for the class to think about! I loved being able to brainstorm with my teammates about what content we wanted to present, how we wanted to communicate it, and how we wanted to tie it all together. When we

were choosing questions to ask everyone, it made me think not only about how I would answer the questions, but also why they were important to ask.

One thing I really noticed about how I think differently after completing this assignment was how I feel like I relate to everyone else so much more. Although some of my music and some of my life experiences are somewhat niche, going into such depth about how music affects us and shapes us has provided a great view for me into how much we really all have in common. Before, I felt more like the “pop people” and the “BTS stans” and the “oldies listeners” were all different cliques and entirely different sorts of people. But now, I find myself noting the similarities in how music is so influential to us instead of focusing on the differences.

I think everybody on this team did a fantastic job of working together. We communicated frequently, split up work efficiently, and reconvened when necessary. Everybody’s opinion was weighed equally, and every member made sure to listen to each other. There was never any one person who was the main driving force behind any of our work, and we didn’t ever have to nag each other to do work. Overall, I think I contributed to this project pretty reasonably, and I was extremely grateful to have such a wonderful team to collaborate with on this project.

Laila

It was very interesting working on this case study. I thought it would be difficult trying to come up with a good thesis and finding sources to support our thesis. However, I had an amazing group who was constantly coming up with great ideas. I loved how when one person came up with a great idea for our research question and thesis, we did not stop coming up with ideas; we would continuously build on the ideas we liked. When it came time to find sources for our thesis, we each struggled trying to find research articles. But, when we all pooled our list of articles together, we realized we had an awesome selection.

This project changed my thinking because I have never considered why our music tastes are the way they are. It was very intriguing to discover how many different factors play a role in a person's music selection. The scholarly articles we found were very insightful, yet, I think I probably learned more from our class discussion than the articles. The biggest takeaway of this case study is that the type of music one listens to relies heavily on the environments they have been exposed to.

As a team member, I think I did well, however, I could have done better in the planning phase. We did most of our planning during class and some days I did not participate as much as I should have. Other than this though, I think I did a pretty good job and I will work harder next time to be more active during the entirety of the planning phase. All of my group members were amazing, they each pulled their weight and I enjoyed working with them. Even though all of us missed at least one day of class, we still made sure to stay on top of our work.

Ashlyn

I actually really enjoyed doing this project. This was definitely an interesting process though. Throughout the entire process of developing a thesis, finding articles, creating a presentation, presenting, and now writing the case study, I was able to further explore my personal opinions about our thesis. I thought it was especially interesting since we were discussing childhood, comparing my childhood musical experiences to other people's musical experiences. I personally get a lot out of presenting in class; it helps me to really understand the material I am presenting on and to expand my thoughts on the topic since I am listening to other people's interpretations and opinions.

This project specifically changed my thinking in realizing that my adolescent musical experience was very different from other people's. I initially thought that most people listened to a lot of different types of music growing up and it was not filtered much, but this was not the

case whatsoever. I also thought that most people would be more broad with their cultural music tastes, which was not true. It made me critically think about how the music I listened to as a child had an impact on me growing up, and my current music taste as a whole.

I believe that this group was very equal in regard to the weight of the project. In my opinion we worked really well together, and it was very enjoyable to work with them for the semester. I personally believe that I could have done more, taken on more, etc. We all were able to contribute our own ideas to the projects, and no one overshadowed anyone else. I always felt that my ideas and thoughts were received very well, which is not always the case in group projects. In conclusion, I believe that the group did an incredible job, and everyone at a minimum pulled their own weight in this project.

Angel

This project has changed my thinking by opening myself up to the possibility of musical connection through memories. Even though I have thought about this topic, the students' strong responses and my want to delve deeper into the research has broadened my thought process of musical connections. To me, finding connections between different variables has always been exciting and this project has changed the way I look at other people and their connections to music. Overall, I have found myself able to be open to the possibilities of meaning and connection from other people. This project, like most of the conversations we have in class, have forced me to reflect on how I think and why, which is always a positive. I hope to continue having these kinds of discoveries about the self while being able to apply it to others.

Throughout the semester, I kept thinking to myself how grateful I am to find such a wonderful, supportive, and equal team. I have had personal experiences with unwilling group members and I am glad to say that I did not experience any negativity towards this group in any category - cooperativeness, supportiveness, and understanding. The rubrics introduced in class

helped to form the foundation of our work ethic and as the semester continued and we grew comfortable with each other, we created our unique group dynamic. It has been a pleasure to work with such a group. As for myself, I think I contributed to the group in different ways. Laila has said to me that she enjoys the energy that I bring to the group and that is one of the highest forms of compliments I can think to receive. Even though other people may have thought I have done enough, I always think that I can improve. But overall, I think everyone put into the semester in equal parts.

Annotated Bibliography

Bond, Vanessa L. "Before They Walk in the Door: Environmental Influences on Musical Ability in Early Childhood and Implications for Nurturing the Nurturers." *Contributions to Music Education* 38, no. 2 (2011): 73-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24127192>.

In this article, Bond talks about the importance of a rich, positive, and nurturing environment in early childhood development in music. The ideal environment looks like a balance between nature and nurture - equal parts intuitive parenting and observation/support of a child's music upbringing. As for our presentation, we can look at this article for the healthy ways children can be brought up and how their musical environment can affect their development. Additionally, this article focuses on the aspect of growth and time, which can be beneficial when connecting with other aspects of musical growth in other parts of a person's life. Overall, I agree with this source. The environment that people are put in greatly affects their musical choices as well as how they grow up to be.

Demorest, Steven M., Steven J. Morrison, Vu Q. Nguyen, and Erin N. Bodnar. "The Influence of Contextual Cues on Cultural Bias in Music Memory." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 33, no. 5 (2016): 590-600. doi:10.2307/26417336.

Demorest et al. looked into the relationship between music biases and performance to see if there was a connection relating to either music or memory. The conducted research on 128 adults who do not have extensive overseas experiences listen to various cultures' music in which their musical elements were closely matched which was followed by a memory recognition task. This can relate to our narrative by bringing us evidence that music is tied to our personal experiences regardless of the culture. As people all have different ways of recalling memory and music being the most used recalling method, I am sure that many people, especially our group, can relate and agree with this article overall.

Hans Baumgartner (1992) , "Remembrance of Things Past: Music, Autobiographical Memory, and Emotion", in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* 19, (1992): 613-620, edited by John F. Sherry, Jr. and Brian Sternthal, Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research. <https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/7363>.

In this article, Baumgartner describes the importance of music in regard to our own personal memory. A study was conducted on 73 marketing majors, and this study concluded that the individuals who participated had memories that were attached to certain pieces of music. Many of these experiences revolved around past relationships or unpleasant experiences. Nostalgia is also a big factor in this, as certain songs can induce this yearning for the past. In these cases, even the bittersweet memories are often seen through a more positive lens. It concludes that music can trigger certain memories linked to it, and it also can help us better to understand ourselves by analyzing that link attached to certain experiences. I agree with this source, because I know that I have songs that are linked to big events in my life.

Morrison, Steven J., Steven M. Demorest, and Laura A. Stambaugh. "Enculturation Effects in Music Cognition: The Role of Age and Music Complexity." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56, no. 2 (2008): 118-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40343719>.

In this study, music listeners were able to remember music from their own culture much better than music from a different culture regardless of whether they were trained or untrained listeners. Also, children performed just as well as, if not better, than the adults on the music memory tasks. This source connects to our thesis because it describes how listeners form a better connection to the music of their own culture than that of another culture. It also connects to our thesis because it shows how both children and adults form a bond to the music they listen to. I agree with the claims of this study and do not find any part of the arguments or evidence unpersuasive.

Mulder, Juul, ter Bogt Tom, Quinten Raaijmakers, and Wilma Vollebergh. "Music Taste Groups and Problem Behavior." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36, no. 3 (04, 2007): 313-334. <https://libproxy.highpoint.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/music-taste-groups-problem-behavior/docview/204634741/se-2?accountid=11411>.

This article discusses the correlation between adolescent music taste and expression of emotional and behavioral problems. 4159 high school students were surveyed about their music tastes, and seven categories of music tastes were recognized. Rock and metal music is associated with internalizing emotions. On the other hand, adolescents who listen to non-mainstream music, or "deviant" music were found to be more likely to externalize their emotions, and thus express problematic behavior. However, music being correlated is not necessarily a causation, and the music is being used as a coping mechanism. I agree with this article that music taste can indicate if an individual is more likely to externalize emotional distress.